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DOCTORAL THESIS

Putting the Storytelling Back into Stories : Creative Non-Fiction in Tertiary Journalism Education.

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**Putting the storytelling back into stories:
Creative non-fiction in tertiary
journalism education**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Journalism Discipline
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ABSTRACT

This work explores the place of creative non-fiction in Australian tertiary journalism education. While creative non-fiction — a genre of writing based on the techniques of the fiction writer — has had a rocky relationship with journalism, this study shows that not only is there a place for the genre in journalism education, but that it is inextricably linked with journalism. The research is based on results from studies using elite interviews and a census of Australian universities with practical journalism curricula.

The first stage of this study provides a definition of creative non-fiction based on the literature and a series of elite interviews held with American and Australian creative non-fiction experts. This definition acknowledges creative non-fiction as a genre of writing that tells true stories while utilising fiction writing techniques such as point of view, dialogue and vivid description. The definition also takes into account creative non-fiction's diverse range of publication styles which include feature articles, memoir, biography, literary journalism and narrative non-fiction.

The second stage of the study reports upon elite interviews with Australian writers who have produced works in the genres of journalism and creative non-fiction. These interviews reveal the close relationship journalism and creative non-fiction share across a variety of approaches and techniques. This study also shows how creative non-fiction can improve the careers of journalists and the quality of journalism.

The census of journalism programs further reveals the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education and prompts the formulation of a two tiered model for the genre's inclusion in the curriculum. The first tier involves including creative non-fiction in a core journalism subject. The second tier is an elective creative non-fiction subject which builds on the skills developed in the core classes.

Through the literature, and the responses of the elites and survey respondents, it was possible to show how creative non-fiction helps journalism students to appreciate the

history of their profession, explore their talents and finally to be part of what may be the future of print journalism.

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Statement of original authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview and research questions

This study addresses two research questions, whose answers reveal new possibilities for journalism education and perhaps even the careers of journalism graduates in this ever-changing professional and academic environment.

The questions are:

- 1. What is creative non-fiction?**
- 2. What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?**

A qualitative method is used in answering the first research question and both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed in answering the second.

1.2 The specific area of research

This study examines creative non-fiction, a new term for an old discipline. Creative non-fiction is a genre of writing with its roots in literary, or 'new', journalism and covers publication styles as diverse as memoir, feature article, literary essay, biography and narrative history (Scanlan, 2003a, p. 2). The creative non-fiction banner encompasses writing about true events and employs techniques normally associated with fiction writing such as dialogue, scene and detailed description of character and place (Gutkind, 1998). Famous writers often published under the creative non-fiction banner include Gay Talese, Truman Capote, Susanna Kaysen, Bill Bryson, Mark Bowden and Susan Orlean.

While the history of creative non-fiction is firmly entrenched in literary journalism, its place in tertiary journalism education is less tangible. There is very little evidence of any work in the literature (see Section 9 of the Literature Review) on the relationship

between creative non-fiction and journalism and yet there are constant calls for a reform of the curriculum. This paradox creates a void for this study to fill.

1.3 Aims

This study sets out to establish the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education and further illuminate the understanding of the importance of storytelling in journalism education and print media. Universities are places of higher learning and this study was designed to discover if creative non-fiction could aid the journalism academic community in improving the level of that learning and, by doing so, improve the quality and volume of students' career opportunities.

1.4 Objectives

To fulfil the aims of the study the following objectives were created:

1. Answer research question 1 – ‘What is creative non-fiction?’

To answer the first research question elite interviews were undertaken with experts in creative non-fiction. They were asked for their responses to previous definitions of the genre and for their own points of view on the subject. It was intended that their responses would provide a focused understanding of creative non-fiction.

2. Answer research question 2 – ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’

To answer the second research question two methods were employed. The first was a second round of elite interviews, this time with experts who had published both traditional journalism and creative non-fiction. They were asked about their opinions and understanding of creative non-fiction’s links with journalism and the future of journalism education. The second method was designed to add a quantitative element to the study through a census of the practical journalism programs in Australia. The census took the form of a questionnaire and asked educators for their views on

creative non-fiction, journalism education and information on what they teach and why.

3. Reach conclusions about creative non-fiction and tertiary journalism education.

By reviewing the results of the two rounds of elite interviews and the census, conclusions were possible about the relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism. More importantly, on an educational front, an understanding of the extent to which creative non-fiction is taught, educators' views on the genre, and its possible future in journalism education was also achievable. Steps were also taken towards ascertaining the value of creative non-fiction to journalism students before and after graduation.

1.5 Relevance

This study is relevant to the journalism professionals and academic communities as it reveals information about the nature of journalism and the skills important for the next generation of journalists. There is much discussion about the changing tastes of contemporary readers, with the popularity of non-fiction books increasing and newspaper readership decreasing (Shoebridge, 2003, p.17). In response, educators and professionals have held conferences in narrative journalism, pleading for a return to a manner of writing that has style and substance (Clark, 2000, p.4). However, narrative journalism, like its predecessor literary journalism, is only one slice of the creative non-fiction pie. While some may use the terms interchangeably, it is clear creative non-fiction covers a greater breadth of publishing styles than any term ending in 'journalism.'

Proof of the popularity and impact of creative non-fiction in Australia and overseas is found in a range of markets and is more fully discussed in Chapter 7 (Section 4). Just one area which shows Australia's hunger for creative non-fiction is the book industry. The table below shows the increasing popularity of non-fiction books in Australia, in their own right and in comparison with fiction titles.

TABLE 1.1

Sales of Australian printed books			
Year	Number of non-fiction books sold (million)	Number of fiction books sold (million)	Difference (million)
1999-2000	25.9	10.8	15.1
2000-2001	18*	2.3*	15.7*
2001-2002	27.4	12.6	14.8
2002-2003	24	10.6	13.4
2003-2004	27.5	8.4	19.2

NOTE: The non-fiction books in this table do not include educational books (which form the largest selling book group in Australia).

*These figures do not include the figures for mass market paperbacks as they were not available for publication by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001; , 2002; , 2003; , 2004; , 2005)

As can be seen in Table 1.1 above, non-fiction titles (which include publication styles like literary journalism, memoir, biography and literary essays) comprehensively out-sell fiction titles. The figures also show a trend in the marketplace towards non-fiction as its sales increase and fiction sales decrease. It is also worth noting that a significant number of these non-fiction books are Australian, and not just part of this country's ravenous diet of overseas, particularly American, products. As the interest in non-fiction increases in Australia, so too does the need for Australians to be schooled in the techniques and publications styles needed to produce these books.

The fact that creative non-fiction is so encompassing of publication styles and so popular, makes its relationship with journalism and its place in journalism education intriguing. While a memoir may not, in the eyes of some educators, be strictly journalism, this may not preclude its teaching in the journalism curriculum. After all, communication theory and politics are also not journalism, yet they are included in many journalism curricula because they are thought to add to the student's body of knowledge and educational experience.

What this study has discovered about creative non-fiction and tertiary journalism education will help educators better understand the place of certain styles and techniques in their teaching. This understanding may lead to the development of new curricula in institutions across Australia. Any change to a curriculum has a potential for wider reaching change. Perhaps, in this case, the changes will lead to graduates with new and different skills and this, one day, may influence the journalism published to the wider community. With these possibilities apparent in this study, its relevance to the professional and academic journalism communities is clear.

1.6 Definition of Terms

As the first research question asks for a definition, it is particularly important to clarify the terminology used throughout this study. Three terms used in this study must be defined. They are ‘genre’, ‘publication style’ and ‘technique’.

Genre

In this study, the term ‘genre’ refers to overarching areas of writing, in this case ‘creative non-fiction’ and ‘journalism’. This use of the term ‘genre’ differs from other uses, for example in film and television, where genre refers to film styles such as horror, romance or crime. This study’s definition is more closely related to the dictionary definition of the term which states ‘genre’ is a “kind, category, or sort, esp. of literary or artistic work” (Makins, 1992, p.531). The genres of writing discussed in this study are comprised of a range of publication styles and techniques which are discussed below.

Publication style

Publication styles belong to genres of writing and are the physical expression of the genre. For example, publishing styles of creative non-fiction include memoir, biography and literary essay.

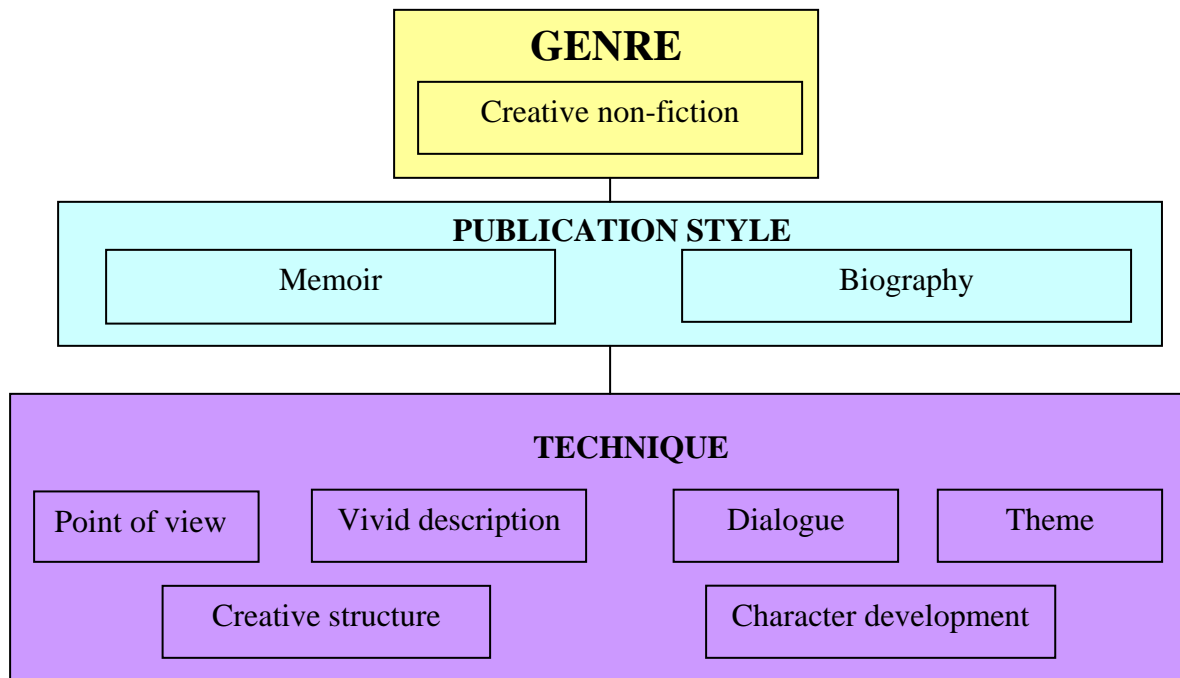
Technique

In this study, the term ‘technique’ refers to the practical writing methods used to produce a publication style within a genre of writing. For example, to produce the creative non-fiction publication style of memoir, it is necessary to utilise the techniques of point of

view and dialogue. To produce journalism's publication style of hard news it would be necessary to employ the techniques of the inverted pyramid and paraphrased quotes.

Below is a conceptual map of creative non-fiction, two of its publication styles, and some of the styles' techniques. This map illustrates how genre, publication styles and techniques differ from each other and how the terms are used in this study. The terms will be further discussed in the following chapters.

FIGURE 1.1 *Terminology description*



1.7 Outline of the remainder of the document

Eight chapters make up the body of this document. Following the chapters are a reference list and appendices.

Chapter 2, the Methodology, reviews past studies in the area and discusses the methodological considerations of this study. It details the use of elite interviewing and survey methodologies as they pertain to this study.

Chapter 3, the Literature Review, looks at the history of creative non-fiction and how the genre has emerged. It also examines the arguments for and against creative non-fiction and explores the current state of the genre, of journalism and of journalism education.

Chapter 4, 'Stage 1: Defining Creative non-fiction', presents the results of the first stage of the study. These results are discussed and a definition of creative non-fiction is formulated.

Chapter 5, 'Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative non-fiction, Phase 1 – Elite Interviews', reveals the results of elite interviews and helps to find the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education through an exploration of the relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism.

Chapter 6, 'Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative non-fiction, Phase 2 – Census of journalism programs', further reveals the relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism and how they fit together in a university setting.

Chapter 7, 'The place of creative non-fiction in journalism education', discusses the implications of Chapters 5 and 6 focusing on the relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism, the purpose of university education and creative non-fiction's relevance in industry. The chapter also formulates a model for creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education.

Chapter 8, the Conclusion, draws together the ideas presented in the preceding chapters to provide a conclusive statement about the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education and its implications for the academic and professional communities.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature on creative non-fiction presents a range of views and theories. There are those which support creativity, personal truth and the term ‘creative non-fiction’. There are others which endorse a universal truth and abhor a style of journalism that filters facts through point of view. Still others fight for a particular terminology for this blend of fiction writing techniques and fact.

To navigate through the literature, and the ethical and definitive arguments surrounding creative non-fiction, two questions have been raised:

1. What is creative non-fiction?
2. What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?

2.2 The origins of news structure

To appreciate the scope of creative non-fiction, the origins of news writing must be considered. Tracing the growth of journalism from its conception to today will provide a framework for understanding how new genres of writing will fit into tertiary journalism education.

Stories are older than language itself. In preliterate society people relied on word of mouth for their news. This was not always the most reliable or safest method of disseminating information. The most famous of all messenger stories is an example of the perils of being the bearer of news (good or bad). The story goes that in 490 BC Athenian messenger Pheidippides ran 25 miles from Marathon to Athens to bring the news of the Greek victory over the Persians. While this information was met with joy, Pheidippides was not able to bask in the glory of the military triumph — he died from exhaustion. Today’s marathon races are a commemoration of this messenger’s commitment to news (Stephens, 1997, p.20). The popular colloquialism, — “Don’t shoot

the messenger” — which dates back to 442BC, is also a prime example of why it is safer to distribute the news via the printed word rather than in person (Esc, 2000, p.1).

Since the first true stories were put to paper, they were told in one way – they began with an attention-grabbing opening, followed by a chronological narrative and finished with a big reveal or surprise ending (Mindich, 1993, p.1). By today’s definition they would fall under the heading of narrative journalism and many could be classed as creative non-fiction.

2.2.1 The emergence of the inverted pyramid

The narrative style eventually gave way to the modern approach. In the last part of the 19th century, narrative stories declined within the pages of newspapers and a new information based approach arose – the inverted pyramid (Mindich, 1993, p.1).

It has been suggested that Edwin M. Stanton, Abraham Lincoln’s Secretary of War, was a major player in the birth of the inverted pyramid and therefore arguably the assassin of the literary news-essay (Mindich, 1993, p.1). Other theories suggest that the pyramid was a result of the United States’ civil war, as reporters were forced to put the most important information first due to the unreliable telegraph system. Another theory is that the wire services used an inverted pyramid style during the war as a way to appear impartial. Mindich (1993, p.26) maintains there is no evidence for these theories as there are no examples of war time inverted pyramid stories. Only the dispatches of Stanton appeared in this style. In fact, Mindich (1993, p.4) wrote that Stanton’s dispatch on Abraham Lincoln’s assassination (April 15 1865) could be one of the first inverted pyramids in history.

No matter which theory is adopted, the fact remains that in a post-civil war world the inverted pyramid flourished. Reporters began to reserve the first paragraph of their stories for the ‘lead’ – for the most newsworthy information – then to order the facts of the story in descending order of importance. Gone was a chronological order. Now stories fitted neatly into the shape of an upside down triangle – the news value of facts

large at the top, getting less and less important as they made their way to the end of the story, or the pointy end of the pyramid (Stephens, 1997, p.246). The inverted pyramid still works in this way in most newspapers today.

2.3 The re-emergence of the narrative news story – New Journalism

The day Lincoln lost his life, narrative storytelling was only superficially wounded. While the inverted pyramid reigned supreme and the narrative style appeared to have vanished from newspapers for good, this traditional form had merely fallen into the shadows. In the 1960s New Journalism (or literary journalism as it is often known) emerged, bringing the narrative style back into vogue and, for the first time, into controversy (Harvey, 1994, p.42).

But, the writers of New Journalism, like its most vocal proponent Tom Wolfe, were not the first in the 20th century to return to the narrative form, to the style of writing that today is called (among other things) ‘creative non-fiction’. According to senior Poynter Institute scholar, Roy Peter Clarke, the foundation of this genre is ancient indeed: “Any historical study of journalism will reveal the existence of powerful narrative forms of writing, going back not generations, but centuries” (Harvey, 1994, p.42). Clarke wrote that the difference between New Journalists (like Wolfe, Truman Capote and Hunter S. Thompson) and those who had gone before them was not that they developed a style of journalism, but that they just wrote more of it. Not only this but they were “doing it more self consciously than it was done in the past” (Harvey, 1994, p.42).

Norman Simms, a former wire service reporter who is now a journalism professor at the University of Massachusetts, agreed with Clarke: “I can point you to two dozen writers in this century who were using the same techniques in effective non-fiction” (Harvey, 1994, p.42). These names include Ernest Hemmingway, George Orwell, Lillian Ross, Joseph Mitchell, A.J. Liebling and John Hershey (Harvey, 1994, p. 42). According to Simms, what separated the preceding eminent writers and the New Journalists was simply time. The New Journalists “were working at the same time, looking at what each other was doing...and innovating” (Harvey, 1994, p.42).

Even in the 1970s when New Journalism was still very ‘new’, historians admitted the origins of the genre were ancient. Jay Jensen traced back one of New Journalism’s more controversial techniques – the creation of a ‘composite’ character from a number of real people – to the ancient Greeks. He wrote this technique was used over 2000 years ago by the Greek, Theophrastus (Jensen, 1974, p.37). While Jensen paid homage to the journalists and writers of the past, he also wrote that the newness of the genre could not be overlooked. After all, it was a huge shift from the style of journalism that had been prevalent before the 1960s; the type, he wrote, which is the conventional style every journalism student learns. This is the type of journalism, according to Jensen (1974, p.37), that is founded in objectivity and unbiased factual reporting, with the focus on gathering information and exploiting sources, rather than the writing.

2.3.1 New Journalism explained

How did we progress from standing on the shoulders of George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway to those of Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote to today’s creative non-fiction? Through emulation, repetition and experimentation a genre grows and develops and through the examination of the tenets of New Journalism, a better understanding of the features of creative non-fiction can be reached.

Mathew Ricketson, while designing a literary journalism course at RMIT, developed six elements of literary journalism from his reading of its practitioners and critics. Breaking down these elements from a page of text to a sentence they are: 1. use documentable subject matter i.e. adhere to the truth, 2. delve into the world of your source, 3. employ “novelistic techniques”, 4. use an authorial rather than the institutional voice, 5. employ a literary prose style and 6. find the underlying meaning (Ricketson, 2004, pp. 235, 236).

These elements are an expansion of the devices Wolfe used to define and create his journalism, “scene-by-scene construction”, recording dialogue “in full” and “presenting every scene to the reader through the eyes of a particular character” (Taylor, 2002, p.29).

Ricketson's elements have something in common with almost all the articles about the teaching of New Journalism. Jack Nelson (1990, p.20), an assistant professor at Brigham Young University in the United States, had a similar approach to Ricketson's. He tackled the idea of objectivity (similar to Ricketson's point 1), the need for interpretation (Ricketson's point 6), use of narration and scenes, dialogue and characterisation (which combined are comparable to Ricketson's point 3) and to write with flair, colour and pizzazz (which is similar to Ricketson's explanation of a literary prose style—point 6) (Nelson, 1990, p.20).

Nelson (1990, p.20) does not deal with the notion of the authorial voice in as great detail as Ricketson, perhaps because it was not a style used by every literary journalist. For example, while Hunter S. Thompson was a main character in his own writing, literary journalists like Lillian Ross (author of *Reporting*) perfected the 'fly on the wall' approach (Berner, 1986, pp.134, 51). The reason for this may be that while Ricketson sets out to explore and define literary journalism, Nelson's purpose is to explain the style specifically for the purpose of teaching it.

Mark Kramer, a literary journalist who has given seminars at Boston University, wrote that the narrative style of journalism is the path to salvation for newspapers. To this end he tries to teach his students how to blend intensive reporting with dramatic presentation (Kirtz 1996, p.1). Kramer joins Ricketson and Nelson with his definition of literary journalism through his list of the hallmarks of the craft:

immersion in the subject; elegant simple style; mixing narrative with digressions; shifting time to reframe events; and using the novelist's tools of character, scene and plot (Kirtz 1996, p.2).

Kramer also reinforced the importance of the truth, stating that literary journalism is "no less objective and probably more accurate than news writing... There's an implicit contract with the reader not to falsify. If you make it up, it's not literary journalism" (Kirtz 1996, p.2).

2.4 The rise of narrative journalism

Moving from the world of New or literary journalism we arrive at narrative journalism. This genre's definition edges closer to that of creative non-fiction, as it allows writers to have more freedom than they would experience if following in Wolfe's footsteps.

Mark Kramer, four years after explaining his ideas about literary journalism in *Quill*, wrote an article for the *Neiman Reports* about the return of narrative journalism to newspapers. There is no mention of the term 'literary journalism' in the article, yet some hallmarks of the genre are strongly promoted: narrative structure, effective research and the use of a narrative voice instead of the standard 'news voice' (Kramer, 2000, p.4).

This narrative writing, as Kramer defined it, has a much wider application than literary journalism, as it enables writers to take what they like from the well of creative techniques and apply them to their work as they see fit. There is not the prescriptive formula that the piece must be a work of tireless immersion in the subject, or the assumption that it will be a lengthy piece of prose. Instead, Kramer (2000, pp.2,3) suggested that this marriage of creativity and journalism, this use of 'storytelling techniques', can be used in almost any news story.

The storytelling approach to news was given concentrated professional attention at a Boston University narrative journalism conference in 1998. There, more than 400 writers and editors gathered to discuss storytelling in news. There was an overwhelming theme at the conference – "that storytelling is the oldest and best way to reach readers" (Kirtz, 1988, p.3). At the conference Roy Peter Clark offered a new set of 5 Ws:

- WHO is character
- WHAT is plot, action, complication
- WHERE is setting
- WHEN is chronology
- WHY is motivation (Kirtz, 1988, p.4)

Clark wrote that scene setting gives readers not just information, but experience. “Language can also put you there, by scene setting, dialogue, revealing details and point of view” (Kirtz, 1988, p.4).

These are certainly the techniques that allowed Americans to understand the horror of the Hiroshima bombing (John Hershey’s *Hiroshima*), the real Hell’s Angels (Hunter S. Thompson’s *Hells Angels*) and the sense of loss experienced by Vietnam Veterans (Tim O’Brien, ‘LZ Gator, Vietnam, February 1994’ *Time Magazine*). These are the techniques that created some of America’s most famous and celebrated pieces of journalism.

These techniques were foreshadowed by R. Thomas Berner in his 1986 article about literary journalism and the use of narrative:

What point of view offers then is not weaker writing, but stronger writing, for it gives a journalist the opportunity to let the reader experience the event as its participants are experiencing it rather than filtered through the inverted pyramid. (Berner, 1986, p.9)

In light of the current decline in newspaper readership and the increased popularity of biographies, memoirs and other non-fiction genres, Berner’s comments appear to have been validated (Cunningham, 2003, p.8). In the future, this narrative approach could pave a new way for journalists to tell their stories in the mainstream; but perhaps not with these older terms of reference.

Despite the term ‘narrative journalism’ encompassing the best techniques of literary journalism and imbuing them with story flexibility, it is not the only style which has developed from the work of the literary journalists and those storytellers who went before them. Today there is a definitive blend of the factual basis of journalism and the creative writing techniques of fiction – creative non-fiction.

2.5 The emergence of creative non-fiction

The term ‘creative non-fiction’ is growing more popular and has become a feature of discussion in the professions of journalism and creative writing and their respective teaching academies (Masse, 1995, p.13). This genre has its roots in literary and narrative journalism, but it is set apart by the breadth of styles it encompasses and the features that define it. To understand how the genre will fit into journalism education, it must first be defined.

There are a range of writers who attempt to define creative non-fiction, describing it interchangeably with literary or narrative journalism, defining it by its forms, or explaining it by examining how to write in the style with success.

In *American Journalism Review*, Chris Harvey explained Tom Wolfe’s style of journalism was still being utilised, but it was no longer called literary journalism.

They prefer the terms ‘literary’ or ‘intimate’ journalism or ‘creative non-fiction’. But their stories are marked by the same characteristics that distinguished Wolfe’s work at *Esquire* and the *New York Herald Tribune*: They’re written in the narrative form, with a heavy emphasis on dialogue, scene setting and slice-of-life details. (Harvey, 1994, p.1)

Rita Berman, in *Writer*, also acknowledged the style’s roots and looked at creative non-fiction through its sub-genres.

What is creative non-fiction? Is it a new genre of writing? An oxymoron? Fictionalised facts? While it sounds like a contradiction in terms, creative non-fiction is a new description for an old skill; that of writing well-crafted saleable articles. For today’s market, however, non-fiction writers are allowed, even encouraged, to incorporate certain fiction techniques and to use the first person “I”... The range of creative non-fiction includes feature articles, memoirs, essays, personality profiles, travel pieces, how-to’s and even contemporary, political, or other social issue pieces. (Berman, 1997, p.5)

The Poynter Institute's online advice columnist Chip Scanlan (2003a, p.2) wrote that creative non-fiction is the latest name for "fact-based writing that is best understood as the union of storytelling and journalism". He also identified a number of styles of writing and publishing outlets when he asked a range of questions about the genre.

What is it?

Creative non-fiction:

Includes personal essay, memoir, literary journalism, academic/cultural criticism, narrative history, feature articles, documentary drama.

Where can you publish it?

Creative non-fiction markets include newspapers magazines, literary journals and books. (Scanlan, 2003a, p.2)

Creative non-fiction can also be explained by describing how best to produce it:

You must have a credible and compelling story to tell. It should inform and enlighten the reader and be based on verifiable facts. Yet, a good creative non-fiction writer will transcend the conventions of fact-based journalism by portraying characters with psychological depth, providing riveting details and descriptions, and presenting a true story that uses dramatic scenes to engage the reader's interest and emotions. (Masse, 1995)

However, the most subscribed definition is the one set out by Lee Gutkind, the man named "the Godfather behind creative non-fiction" by *Vanity Fair* (Wolcott, 1997). Over the past 15 years, Gutkind has discussed the genre and its definition at universities and conferences all over the United States, Europe and even here in Australia where the term is only in its infancy (there is little academic discussion on the genre and no Australian journals publish under this term). Gutkind has written books and publishes a journal on the genre (*Creative Nonfiction*), has directed conferences on the topic, edited a series of textbooks and teaches creative non-fiction at the University of Pittsburgh. For the genre's Godfather, the distinguishing features of creative non-fiction can be found in his journal:

WHAT IS CREATIVE NON-FICTION?

Dramatic, true stories using scenes, dialogue, close, detailed descriptions, and other techniques usually employed by poets and fiction writers about important subjects – from politics, to economics, to sports, to the arts and sciences, to racial relations and family relations. (Gutkind, 2000, p.1)

In a journal article about brilliant non-fiction Gutkind described what he saw as the essence and meaning of creative non-fiction through its ability to touch readers:

The ability to capture the personal and the private and to make it mean something significant to a larger audience and to provide intellectual substance that will affect readers – perhaps even incite them to action or to change their thinking – in a compelling and unforgettable way. (Postel, 2003, p.100)

A milestone in the dissemination and acceptance of the term was when Bill Roorbach, an award winning writer and an academic, produced the edited text *Creative non-fiction: the art of truth*. This book is important, not just because of what is between the covers, but what is on them. This is an Oxford University Press publication, and with all the prestige that is lent to a book by being published by Oxford, perhaps some of this prestige is also lent to the label of ‘creative non-fiction’. The publisher could have chosen another term such as ‘narrative non-fiction’ or ‘the Fourth Genre’ but it is ‘creative non-fiction’ that graces the cover.

This decision may rest, in part, on the excellent argument Roorbach makes for ‘creative non-fiction’ in the book’s introduction,

What a troublesome term *creative non-fiction* is, and yet we seem to be stuck with it. I mean what could ‘creative non-fiction’ possibly mean, when all writing is creative, and most writing is non-fiction? Some very smart people have proposed all kinds of other terms to name this old form...: ‘literary non-fiction,’ ‘the literature of reality,’ ‘the Fourth Genre’ (with poetry, fiction, and drama being the first three)... ‘New Journalism,’ ‘narrative non-

fiction,’... But none is any more accurate or inclusive than ‘creative non-fiction,’ and some are less accurate, and too exclusive... For the sake of continued definition, let us say that creative non-fiction is non-fiction that deserves (or in workshops among apprentice and journeyperson practitioners, that aspires to deserve) to be placed up there on the literature shelves along with the best fiction and poetry. (Roorbach, 2001, pp.2,3)

Whatever the reason for Oxford’s decision to utilise the ‘creative non-fiction’ label, it is clear that it is firmly cemented in both the publishing and academic worlds.

Creative non-fiction is more than a genre of writing for the people who practise it. Rather than being restricted to types of publication – memoir, feature article, biography and the rest – creative non-fiction is a way of writing. It is a style with roots in literary journalism and fiction writing and a future within the pages of a range of books, magazines and newspapers.

2.5.1 Creative non-fiction defined in Australia

While the term ‘creative non-fiction’ is relatively new in Australia, a fact evidenced by its omission from any article in the *Australian Journalism Review*, the Australian Association of Writing Programs held a conference in 2000 with creative non-fiction as one of its main themes (Brien, 2000). Lee Gutkind was one of the keynote speakers and as part of the conference a range of Australian creative non-fiction was assembled.

In her introduction to the anthology produced for the conference, Donna Lee Brien, former teacher of creative non-fiction at Queensland University of Technology, described creative non-fiction as a way to group, discuss and publish Australian writing as diverse as memoir, fictionalised biography, autobiography and other life writing, some literary/New Journalism, the ‘creative essay’, innovative self-aware critical fiction and forms of experimental and narrative/dramatised history writing. Brien (2000, p.1) also admitted her list was not complete or definitive, as ‘creative non-fiction’ is a term that is inclusive and expansive. Her description of the genre above, and below, is a mirror of Gutkind’s and other American proponents’ definitions of the genre.

This type of writing [creative non-fiction] is particularly suited to a focus on the personal, on human values and ethical issues, on a sense of the self in action, and on material which deals with emotional content in a way that texts which aim to be totally objective may not be able to do. Creative non-fiction is thus the perfect vehicle for the writer who wishes to reveal the impossibility of any immaculate objectivity when it comes to writing non-fiction, and instead wants/needs to reveal in a subjective approach. In creative non-fiction subjectivity is not hidden, but is rather one of the foundations of the approach. (Brien, 2000, p.3)

In Australia, creative non-fiction is only beginning to be seen as a legitimate style of writing, one that has worth in university education. Perhaps this is a positive situation – unlike the United States, where the genre is typically found in fiction writing departments, in Australia we have the opportunity to try different ways of classifying the place of creative non-fiction and by doing so to include it in different schools, whether they be English, creative writing, or journalism.

2.5.2 Critical definitions of ‘creative non-fiction’ and response from its supporters

James Wolcott, the *Vanity Fair* reporter who gave Gutkind his ‘Godfather’ title in 1997, was not a man who favoured the genre. In fact, the article was a wholesale condemnation of creative non-fiction. Wolcott (1997, p.89) denigrated the genre calling it: “a sickly transfusion, whereby the weakling personal voice of sensitive fiction is inserted into the beery carcass of non-fiction... to form a big, earnest blob of me-first sensibility”.

According to Gutkind, Wolcott had taken the immense spectrum of styles in creative non-fiction and boiled them down to just one, the memoir. In fact, as Rita Berman (1997, p.5) pointed out, creative non-fiction encompasses the styles of feature articles, essays, personality profiles, travel pieces, social issue pieces and Wolcott’s loathed memoirs.

In an article in his journal *Creative Nonfiction*, Gutkind (1998) truly took Wolcott to task, writing that the editors of his journal encourage a personal voice with a universal viewpoint rather than “the sentences Wolcott is permitted to write or his half baked

allusions to literary culture.” Gutkind (1998) went further: “I don’t mind being attacked or criticised — we deserve and appreciate thoughtful and constructive criticism. But Wolcott’s work is egocentric, self-serving, and shallow; worse it’s not high quality writing.” For Gutkind (1998) high quality writing is what lies between the covers of his journal; stories of a high literary standard that are three dimensional and have emotion, intelligence and impact.

Vanity Fair was not the only publication to take creative non-fiction to task in the 1990s. The *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and other prominent newspapers and magazines acknowledged the proliferation of works in the genre (particularly memoirs) but they also predicted the early death of these writing styles.

According to Gutkind, these publications were also derisive of the term ‘creative non-fiction’, preferring to use the descriptors ‘literary journalism’, ‘narrative non-fiction’ and even ‘expository writing’. As Gutkind explained, “In its precocious and traditional simplicity, *The New Yorker* called the creative non-fiction it published by John McPhee, Roger Angell, Jane Kramer, etc., ‘fact pieces.’ Anything but creative non-fiction” (Fourche, 2001, p.173).

The news media has not been alone in its criticism of the blend of creativity and fact. Journals have also been a medium for argument. Writer Dwight Macdonald was certainly a critic. He was quoted as calling New Journalism, “...parajournalism,... a bastard form, having it both ways, exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric licence of fiction” (Harvey, 1994, p.42). However, some may argue that having it both ways is twice as much fun.

Gutkind is not the first proponent of creativity in journalism to take these critics (and/or their newspapers) to task. Tom Wolfe has been noted for his cutting remarks about the *New Yorker*. The 1966 issue of the *Colombia Journalism Review* criticised Wolfe for his article “Tiny Mummies! The True Story of the Ruler of 43rd Street’s land

of the Walking Dead!” in which Wolfe characterised the editor of the *New Yorker*, William Shaw, as an embalmer of a dead institution (Harvey, 1994, p.42).

Despite the plethora of professional and academic criticisms, Gutkind and many others still advocate the genre of creative non-fiction and all its features. For Gutkind it is not so much about the five W’s (who, what, when, where and why) but the five R’s. He wrote that creative non-fiction’s five basic elements are “Real-life stories, Reflection, ‘Riting in scenes, Research, and Reading” (Gourley, 2003, p.2).

For Gutkind, the difference lies in the way the story is told. The use of theme, action-oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation and point of view are all factors that come together to produce a work of creative non-fiction (Gutkind & Gatti, 1996, p.28). Of course Gutkind also says that for it to be creative non-fiction rather than fiction there must also be one other factor – adherence to the facts, or in his words, “We do not make up out-of-the-air information of any kind – for any reason” (Fourche, 2001, p.176). This of course differs from telling the truth, and this is a topic which will be dealt with in Section 7.

Other scholars in the area have reinforced Gutkind’s description. Mark Masse wrote that to produce successful non-fiction, a writer must have a credible and compelling story, based on verifiable information that informs and enlightens the reader. While doing all this the writer must also rise above the boundaries of “fact-based journalism” to give the reader characters with psychological depth, riveting descriptions and details and dramatic scenes that engage interest and emotions (Masse, 1995, p.13).

2.6 Towards a definition of journalism – an exculpatory introduction

The term ‘creative non-fiction’ describes a genre of writing, but the term ‘journalism’ describes a genre which includes not only writing, but also the work of photographers and editors. Perhaps for this reason, ‘journalism’ is a concept that even the journalism community struggles to define adequately.

Despite its scope, it is strange to think there is still difficulty defining journalism when its history stretches back to the work of Roman orator, philosopher and politician, Cicero. In 51 BC Cicero began to publish news to upper-class Romans in the *acta* (a news sheet), including human-interest stories by 47BC (Stephens, 1997, p.xiii). In Europe a printed form of journalism emerged much later — in 1470 — when the oldest news publication printed on a letter press arrived. Then nearly 100 years later — 1566 — the ancestor of the newspaper was born in the form of handwritten weekly newssheets in Venice (Stephens, 1997, p.xiv).

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries pamphlets began to circulate in England and in 1609 the first weekly newspaper was printed in German. Then, in 1615, the first English newspaper was published and 70 years later the first newspaper was printed in America (Stephens, 1997, p.xv1). Australia followed over 100 years later with the *Sydney Gazette* first published in 1803. The paper was published “By Authority” and was censored by the Governor or his secretary. Censorship was lifted in 1824, paving the way for opposition papers. Magazines also went into production that decade, with the first emerging in 1821 (Mayer, 1964, p.10).

The first major example of the crossover between the literary and the journalistic occurred in 1846 when the *London Daily News* was published with Charles Dickens as founding editor. In Australia, in the mid 1860s, newspapers included in their weekly publications serialised novels and other literary reading matter (Morrison, 1993, p.64). In the late 1880s *The Bulletin* began to publish regularly the works of writers such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson (Australian Government Department of Communications p.1). In 1923 the weekly news magazine *Time* was launched in America, followed in 1925 by the *New Yorker* and in 1933 by *Life*, *Sport Illustrated* and *Fortune* (Stephens, 1997, p.xxi). In Australia, what would become the world’s highest circulating magazine per capita, *Australian Women’s Weekly*, also emerged in 1933. While this publication is well known today as a monthly magazine, the *Weekly* was in newspaper format at its inception (“History: The Australian Women's Weekly”, 2004, p.1).

As journalism developed over the centuries, so did a need for defining ethical practices. While journalists fought and won protection from the government in countries like the United States and Australia, it was also apparent that the public often needed protection from journalists. In Australia, the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) (now part of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, MEAA) developed the AJA code of ethics. Today's code stipulates a code of conduct for MEAA member journalists and also provides a definition for the profession:

AJA CODE OF ETHICS

Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfill their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to

Honesty

Fairness

Independence

Respect for the rights of others. (MEAA, 1997)

It is important to note that respect for truth and the provision of information to the public (the principles of journalism referred to in the code's first sentence) are both features of creative non-fiction as identified in the literature (Postel, 2003, p.100) (Fourche, 2001, p.175).

While the code of ethics provides a glimpse into the meaning of journalism from an ethical standpoint, the *Collins Dictionary* provides a simple general definition of

journalism, “the profession or practice of reporting about, photographing, or editing news stories for one of the mass media” (Makins, 1992, p.701).

When the academic literature is examined, a myriad of more personal and colourful definitions emerges. David Conley, one of Australia’s prominent journalism educators, describes journalism this way:

If the media acts as a society’s scoreboard, journalists are its score keepers. Some might think the score is padded, or that someone cannot count, but few can deny that journalists are daily historians... Journalism is a society’s rendezvous with expression, marshalling community debate and creating its forum. (Conley, 1997, p.ix)

Conley has taken the dictionary definition further to include the ideas of journalism reporting the truth and providing both a record of society and a way for that society to voice its opinions.

Gina Barton took yet another step to ensure that the dictionary term ‘mass media’ was not misinterpreted. She endeavoured to ensure the definition of news in the media is not only newspapers, magazines and television, but also includes the work of literary reporters, such as those who write true crime (Barton, 2002, p.10).

Defining the term ‘journalist’ can also shed light on the understanding of ‘journalism’. Freedom of the Press executive director, Lucy Dalgish, defined a journalist as: “Someone who is collecting information with the purpose of disseminating it to the public” (Barton, 2002, p.10).

Others, like Jeff Mohl, editor of *Quill*, have stated that not only is there no sufficient definition of journalism, but that it is legally dangerous to the integrity of free speech to define the concept (Mohl, 2002, p.3). However, that sort of thinking is not very useful here.

From the literature it appears the idea of print journalism is that people will be witnesses, they will write down the truth of what they saw, and publish this information to others. Traditionally this publication of the truth has been in newspapers and magazines and more recently on the internet. With this style of definition it seems clear creative non-fiction could fit under the journalism umbrella when the style is applied to articles in newspapers, magazines and similar internet publications. However, what is not as easily understood is whether the other publication styles of creative non-fiction, ie biographies, memoirs and literary essays, are journalism. It seems critics like Gina Barton would say they are, but this question requires further examination and will be dealt with in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In 1938, in *Enemies of Promise*, Cyril Connolly wrote: “Literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice; journalism what will be read once” (Augarde, 1991, p.80). Perhaps creative non-fiction is the art of writing something that will be read one and a half times.

2.7 The truth

A great deal of the literature on creative non-fiction argues about the truth – what it is, how important it is to journalism and if it is adhered to outside straight hard-news reporting. In fact, the arguments on any writing being truthful and the relationship between life and literature, date back to the debates of Plato and Aristotle in *The Republic* and *Poetics*. (Brien, 2002, p.1).

This discussion of the truth is particularly significant to this study as the importance of truthful or factual reporting is something stressed in most journalism subjects. So to assess the advantages and disadvantages of building creative non-fiction into journalism education, the genre’s approach to the truth must be determined. Of course, this discussion is limited and does not aim to engage in a comprehensive analysis of the ‘truth’, a topic which has provided work for philosophers over centuries.

The days when the search for the absolute truth in news was a worthy pursuit appear to be gone. In a post-modern world critics and academics have moved beyond the search for absolute truth in journalism, admitting the effects of bias and human memory can taint a story (Stephens, 2005 p.61). Despite the consensus that the absolute truth is a subject for philosophers and not journalists, there is still great debate over the relative importance of finding the personal truth while still remaining true to the facts. This is the ground on which much of academia fights its battles. It is a battle waged on the uneven ground of the literary journalism tradition on one side and the paved stones of the inverted pyramid on the other.

The first line of the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA) code of ethics states: "Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism" (MEAA, 1997). This is where the argument begins and ends. Journalists, or anyone purporting to be writing non-fiction, should respect the truth and be committed to the first clause of the AJA code: "Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts" (MEAA, 1997). What questions remain are: is the factual truth the one that should be strived for? And: is creative non-fiction more likely than another sort of non-fiction, such as hard news reporting, to abuse the truth?

The notion of what the truth is, beyond the obvious dictionary definition: "true /tre:/ *adj* (-r, -st) **1** corresponding to true facts" (Cowie, 1989, p.1374) is well described in an article looking at how creative non-fiction fails to tell the truth. This piece, by academic and novelist, Helen Benedict, asserted that creative non-fiction does not reach the essence of truth, but this is not because it strays from the facts. Instead, Benedict wrote that the genre's adherence to the facts is its downfall. For this teacher of journalism, it is fiction that gets to the heart of a matter; not its 'clumsy cousin' non-fiction.

The kind of truth I'm talking about is the subjective truth of what it means to be a human being in the world... it hides in the blanks on a reporter's tape recorder, behind the door after the journalist leaves, and inside the mind where no interviewer can go. (Benedict, 1999, p.47)

Yet this is also the truth that creative non-fiction writers strive for; what they think sets them above, or apart from journalists. A teacher of creative non-fiction wrote of the success of one of his students when she grasped this truth that exists beyond fact.

She, like other good non-fiction writers, taps all her imaginative resources... She's ready to use whatever literary devices come to mind for her purposes - dialogue, characterisation, setting, conscious pacing. The kernel, the essence of the truth, its spirit more than its letter — this is what she is after. Her particular sprit of truth 'bloweth where it listeth', and if imaginative, even non-logical, non-linear associative approaches are at hand, it uses them without compunction. (Renker, 1998, p.4)

When it comes to creative non-fiction even the proponents admit it is an area where the tendency to fabricate can be tempting. Mark Fitzgerald wrote,

Non-fiction authors now routinely re-create scenes they did not witness, present pages of back-and-forth dialogue they did not record, and tell their stories through any number of points of view, including the private thoughts of the story subjects themselves. (Fitzgerald, 2002, p.15)

But for Fitzgerald, this sort of writing represents the bottom end of creative non-fiction, with many authors in fact using the techniques of fiction to write gripping page turners that are "as true and accurate as any article fit to print in *The New York Times*" (Fitzgerald, 2002, p.15).

This is where the advocates of creative journalism reach a consensus: they admit some people writing creative non-fiction have manufactured sources or even entire stories, but they point out that writers in other journalistic fields are also guilty of this crime. Lee Gutkind has cited numerous journalists who have tried to misrepresent fiction as fact. He explained that creative non-fiction, or any genre of non-fiction writing, is not the reason for a distortion of the facts, it is the individual writer who must be held accountable. In 1997, Stephen Glass admitted to fabricating sections of 27 articles for *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *Harper's* and *George*. In 1999, *Boston Globe* columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner, Patricia Smith confessed to creating people and

quotations for four of her columns, fabricating an entire column about a woman dying of cancer. As Gutkind points out, neither journalist claimed they were trying to be creative, they were simply being dishonest (Fourche, 2001, p.175)

Like Fitzgerald, Gutkind also acknowledged that with the proliferation of the genre over the past few years, particularly with writers who are not from a journalistic background, the fact-based core of creative non-fiction can be lost.

Roy Peter Clark used the terms 'journalist' and 'non-fiction writer' interchangeably in his article on the truth. There, he admitted the limitations of any writing to be 100 percent truthful. He went as far as recounting a post-modern view of the truth argument.

The post-modernist might think this is all irrelevant, arguing that there are no facts, only points of view, only 'takes' on reality, influenced by our personal histories, our cultures, our race and gender, our social class. The best journalists can do in such a world is to offer multiple frames through which events and issues can be seen. Report the truth? they ask. Whose truth? (Clark, 2000, p.2)

While he discussed the nature of the truth, Clark also distilled what he believed were the two things journalists, or non-fiction writers, should not do if their work was to be truthful (at least in the factual sense, if not something larger). His recipe for factual reportage was 'do not add and do not deceive' (Clark, 2000, p.2). He elaborated on both principles:

Do not add. This means that writers of non-fiction should not add to a report things that did not happen. To make news clear and comprehensible, it is often necessary to subtract or condense. Done without care or responsibility, even such subtraction can distort. We cross a more definite line into fiction, however, when we add facts or images or sounds that were not there.

Do not deceive. This means that journalists should never mislead the public in reproducing events. The implied contract of all non-fiction is binding: the way it is represented here is, to the best of our knowledge, the way it

happened. Anything that intentionally or unintentionally fools the audience violates that contract and the core purpose of journalism – to get at the truth. Thus, any exception to the implied contract – even a work of humour or satire – should be transparent or disclosed. (Clark, 2000, p.3)

Clarke's comments encapsulate much of the thought on the issue of the truth. All writers of non-fiction, whether they call themselves journalists, memoirists, biographers or creative non-fiction writers, must not fabricate facts, quotes, anecdotes or anything else. They must not lie in their work and they must not lie to their readers who believe what they have bought to be as close to the truth as humanly possible.

2.7.1 Ethics of the truth

Bronwyn T. Williams, a former journalist, editor and now university professor, took the discussion of the truth and pushed it another step. In his article 'Never let the truth stand in the way of a good story' Williams (2003, p.290) asked not whether creative non-fiction writers tell the truth, but whether they should tell the truth.

Williams wrote that while he enjoys reading true stories, particularly memoirs about people's lives, they can often make him uneasy. It is not for the same reason as critics who write that memoirs (and other forms of creative non-fiction) are nothing but narcissistic navel gazing. Williams is comfortable with the revelations writers make about themselves, but is sometimes disturbed by what writers reveal about others. "I can't but wonder what must their children/parents/spouses/friends think about being written of in this way? Even if the stories are true, it is their lives that are on display as much as the writers'" (Williams, 2003, p.296).

As an educator, Williams fears for the teaching of creative non-fiction, especially when it is taught in an English department. These fears are based on his discovery that most creative non-fiction syllabi or course offerings rarely include courses on ethics and representation.

I worry that when we teach students in creative non-fiction about the social construction of the truth, about the slipperiness of memory, we want to open the door for a more thoughtful critique of culture and society, but risk letting in instead an easy cynicism and a willingness to be sloppy about research and facts — as well as a potential for self-absorption. At the same time I worry that if we tell our students to write the truth and damn the consequences, an attitude shared by far too many in journalism as well, we are teaching them to ignore or, at best, rationalise the casualties that mount beside the road that leads to such truth. (Williams, 2003, p.301)

These fears are well founded as the genre of creative non-fiction straddles the boundaries of many disciplines, including creative writing, English composition and journalism. With this in mind, finding a place for creative non-fiction in a university setting (one that takes into account the genre's roots, criticisms, need for truth and understanding of ethics) is not a simple task, but it is an important one.

2.8 Journalism education

Creative non-fiction is clearly an emerging area of writing, but its place in education is not so clear. To assess the advantages and disadvantages of building creative non-fiction into journalism education, it is necessary to look at the current status of tertiary journalism education in Australia, what is taught, and what its future holds.

Journalism education began in the United States in 1908, in 1919 the first program began in London (Herbert, 2000, p.113), and in Australia the first diploma course began at the University of Queensland in 1921 (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p.263).

The history of journalism education in Australia is filled with contention, with academics and journalists often at odds about what students should be taught. In 1919, the Australian Journalists Association recommended universities establish degree or diploma courses which would have a foundation of arts subjects, but also include a component of practical journalism skills and knowledge. Despite their recommendations,

the first diploma course in journalism, created at the University of Queensland, included no journalism subjects. Instead, students studied English, history, politics and economics (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p.258). It was in fact a diploma *for* journalists rather than a diploma *in* journalism. The situation did not change until 1934 when the University of Queensland introduced journalism subjects including the history and law of journalism, reporting, proof-reading and paragraph writing. The new Diploma in Journalism was first taught in 1935 (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p.259).

In the 85 years since the first studies for Australian journalists began, courses have been initiated and revoked, degrees invented, and journalism departments established (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p.261). Postgraduate programs have also been founded, as have courses for secondary schools. Links have even been created with industry, despite the continuing adversarial relationship that exists between academia and the profession. Journalism educators have become more prominent, with appearances at and advice given to royal commissions and parliamentary enquiries, national media and international conferences (Pearson, 1994, pp.100, 101). Journalism education has reached such popularity that it was estimated that there were 300 mainstream media jobs in 1995 for three times as many graduates from Australia's vocational journalism courses. The number of graduates was only expected to increase (Patching, 1997, p.113).

2.8.1 Criticisms and hopes for journalism education in Australia

Despite the leaps forward that have occurred, the success of journalism education in Australia is not agreed upon, nor has a consensus been reached over how to best educate future reporters and editors. Instead, many educators have put forward a range of suggestions about what journalism education should be or should include. John Henningham, the founder and director of Jscool, wrote that a core curriculum should exist in all tertiary J-schools including the following subjects:

- News Reporting & Writing I, II, III
- Sub-editing & Production
- Journalism Ethics
- Journalism Law

- Media Research Methods
- Theories of News Media
- International Media
- Journalism and Society. (Henningham, 1994, p.89)

He also suggests other journalism subjects like “feature writing” and “magazine journalism” be treated as electives (Henningham, 1994, p.91). There is no mention in his article of a creative style of writing such as creative non-fiction, literary journalism or narrative journalism.

Other scholars concentrate on the balance needed between the teaching of theory and practice. John Herbert, a member of the *Australian Journalism Review* editorial board, wrote that when a course is designed, much time is spent on deciding how theory should be integrated in skills training. Not focusing on theory leaves the course as nothing more than vocational training. In contrast to the strength of these efforts, he believes little or no time is spent on ways of introducing practical elements to the theory. If this step is followed, he stated, it will improve journalism education (Herbert, 1997, p.12).

The theory and practice debate became the dominant argument in journalism education during the late 1990s. The epicentre of the argument was the seminar organised in 1998 at the Queensland University of Technology. At the Media Wars: Media Studies and Journalism Education seminar, debates flourished over the place of media and cultural studies in a journalism program, and in fact the place of journalism subjects in a media/cultural studies degree (Flew, 1999, p.10). Numerous educators and theorists put their points of view on the table (as have many others previously and since), yet, as with many other debates, it seems even in 2006 no consensus has been reached.

Perhaps the most telling example of the problems in creating a newer, better form of journalism education in Australia is the failure of the National Working Party on Journalism Education and Training. The Party was formed in 1987 consisting of industry representatives, members of the Australian Journalists Association and the Journalism Education Association. Their aim was to set minimum standards for Australian

journalism courses and their directives included deciding what constituted the work of journalists and what attributes and skills they needed. Despite 18 months deliberation, the Party failed to agree on how to define a journalist, let alone identify what attributes and skills he/she needed. In 1990 the Party dissolved when the AJA and employers set up their own post-cadetship training, the Journalism Education and Training (JET) scheme (Patching, 1997, p.47). The JET officers did not involve academics in the creation of the course, widening the divide between the scholarly and the professional and creating more questions for tertiary journalism education.

More recently, the Journalism Education Association (JEA) began working towards the accreditation of journalism courses. Former JEA president, Kerry Green was involved in heading a 2004 ARC linkage grant to fund research into the elements of journalism education in Australia that have had a positive impact on professional journalism and the creation of a system of comparison and assessment of journalism courses. Green made the point that without accreditation, it was impossible for employers to know which journalism courses included the kind of skills which were relevant to industry (Green, 2003, p.163). Despite the logic behind the accreditation movement, it met with problems, as had the JET scheme before it. The ARC grant was unsuccessful and, to date, there is no accreditation for journalism courses in Australia. However, discussion continues on the subject and the JEA is still behind the notion of accreditation.

2.8.2 The j-school crisis in the United States

While debate continues in Australia about the 'perfect' journalism education, there are more vocal and hostile disputes in the United States. There the search for the best J-school is fought out in newspapers, academic journals, within and beyond the departments of the hallowed Ivy League. In the 1990s, New York University's journalism department was torn apart by a dispute on what to teach and in 2002, Columbia University's president called off the search for a Journalism School dean and decided instead to rethink the school's mission (Cunningham, 2002, pp.22,26).

The New York University (NYU) debate raised many issues, the most interesting of which was examined in an article by Mitchell Stephens (2000, p. 63), who, despite using NYU as an example, advised his comments were his alone and did not necessarily represent those of his faculty or university. For Stephens (2000, p. 63), the issue was not the same as Herbert's – the balance between professional skills and theory – instead his argument was that journalism programs have placed too much emphasis on teaching 'the basics' and not enough on advancing journalism. Stephens defined 'the basics' this way:

Don't forget who, what, when, where and if you can get it, why. Reporters should not accept gifts from sources. The attribution goes after the first sentence of the quote. A suspect must not be convicted in a news story. 'Completely destroyed' is redundant. That extra phone call is always necessary. (Stephens, 2000, p. 63)

Stephens looked towards the practices of other faculties such as law and drama, to inform his view of journalism education. In other schools, he wrote, there is a tradition of providing students with the most difficult challenges to broaden their understanding and engage their minds. At the Yale School of Drama, for example, students spent almost a third of their time on the difficult task of Shakespeare. While the School's dean admitted the students would not spend a third of their careers performing the works of the Bard, "we believe it is very important that students engage on that level of imagination and challenge" (Stephens, 2000, p. 63). For Stephens, the problem for journalism schools was their focus on the basics, the most formulaic style of writing, making it impossible for original contributions to journalism.

Stephens' other criticism was that these basics represent only one style of writing: that practised in newspapers two thirds the way through the 20th century. Other styles of journalism, from different eras and different countries, are relegated to novelties (Stephens, 2000, pp. 63,64). By ignoring past traditions and concentrating on the basics, to the exclusion of other forms of journalism, j-schools are unable to respond to the dissatisfaction with some of their current practices. Stephens (2000, p. 64) continued to

assert that the current changes in technology and emerging styles of journalism demand a wider scope of subjects to be taught in the journalism curriculum.

Stephens admitted there had been a response to the changing world in the form of digital journalism classes and discussions on the fate of journalism. However, he believed core courses were taught as if there were only one right way of practising journalism; that educators believed their goals would be attained if students knew the difference between robbery and burglary and could write a successful lead. Instead, Stephens (2000, p. 64) looked forward to courses that seek to do more; to produce students with great, not just solid writing.

To achieve this end, Stephens suggested a range of new subjects be introduced into the curriculum:

- Mix theory and practice. It is not enough for students to sit in a seminar and discuss critiques of journalism; they have to be given opportunities to respond to those critiques in their work.
- Let students explore. No major newspaper in the country restricts itself to the inverted pyramid... why can't students be asked to experiment with a variety of other writing – video or digital – styles: not just features but essays, first person narratives, opinion pieces, cinema verite reportage, fast-cut images and multimedia and interactive forms?... Couldn't the importance of proper attribution and the difference between “which” and “that” be imparted along the way?
- Honour a broader tradition. At NYU we now require all graduate students to take a readings course in great journalism. And it is significant how little of that great journalism – by Richard Harding Davis, Ben Echt, Ernest Hemmingway... Joan Didion, et al – employs the formulas insisted upon in reporting 101... It also serves to claim this remarkably searching and well-crafted non-fiction writing for journalism – something journalism programs have been oddly reluctant to do.

- Look deeper... certainly there is room for an alternative model: one in which students study a subject deeply – in a single course or a whole program – while they are reporting on it.
- Encourage experimentation. (Stephens, 2000, p. 64)

Two years after NYU engaged in debates on journalism education, Columbia began its search for the perfect j-school. The investigation began after Lee C. Bollinger, the new president of the university, ended the search for a new dean of journalism, unhappy with the school's focus on skills training (Mencher, 2002, p. 102). With the words, "To teach the craft of journalism is a worthy goal but clearly insufficient in this new world and within the setting of a great university," American journalism education was thrown into turmoil ("Journalism education", 2002, p. 100). Next, Bollinger created a 36-member taskforce to examine, in his words, "what a pre-eminent school of journalism should look like in the contemporary world" ("Journalism education", 2002, p. 100).

As part of the search, Brent Cunningham was sent out by the editors of the *Columbia Journalism Review* to discern what revolutionary practices were part of journalism schools across the United States. What Cunningham discovered was a range of techniques and curricula that incorporated the scholarly and the practical (as Herbert suggested), offered students the chance to create degrees specific to their needs, incorporated subjects and ideas from other disciplines, and fostered a climate of academic and professionally targeted research. In the end, Cunningham (2002 p.29) formulated his idea of the perfect postgraduate journalism program that incorporated all the ideas listed above.

Around the same time, Cunningham was writing his review of journalism schools, Melvin Mencher, a professor emeritus of Columbia, was taking Bollinger to task in the *Nieman Reports*. In his article, Mencher examined how journalism had often been dissolved into mass media courses, where academics rule and teachers with professional qualifications are becoming less employable. He went further to assert that problems exist in many skills based courses because the study of the subject matter of journalism

(how the courts work, the sociology of police department, political, economic and social problems) has been cast aside in favour of “Endless hours spent with computers and cameras, a fascination with the digital documentary, storytelling and first-person narrative techniques, instruction on how to write for multimedia (convergence journalism)” (Mencher, 2002, p. 103).

Mencher’s ideas seem to be in direct contrast to those suggestions of writers like Stephens, yet they still have common ground, a place they share with Herbert and Cunningham. This is the need for a curriculum that blends theory with practical skills. Mencher (2002, p. 103) wanted to see in place a core curriculum that provides students with the knowledge necessary to make sense of the complex world around them, “Such course work provides the background that allows reporters to make useful hypotheses that guide their reporting.” Mencher’s (2002, p. 103) core subjects reflected his idea that a talented student does not need to know *how* to write but *what* to write, “Among the required courses possible are a foreign language, U.S. history, a physical and a social science, introduction to philosophy, municipal government and college mathematics.”

The debate at Columbia did not remain within the university walls, but instead spilled out into the American journalism academic community and beyond. From as far as Russia, critics responded to the situation at Columbia and the far reaching implications of the debate (Romano, 2003, p. B12).

Carlin Romano, journalist, academic and critic, weighed into the argument with not only criticism of journalism education, but also for its critics. Romano stated the situation at Columbia erupted due to an endemic perception of j-schools as irrelevant by the professional community, and unfit to be housed in a university by the academic community. For Romano, the failure of journalism programs, and thus their inability to garner respect, fell into two areas. The first was that journalism graduates were incapable of doing four things that would endear them to future employers:

1) breaking a big story, 2) questioning whether their organisation should do that story, 3) questioning whether the story is that big and 4) forcing their organisations to do other stories in other ways. (Romano, 2003, p. B12)

Romano's second point was that in today's climate an understanding of journalism and media issues should be as much of a requirement for a degree from any faculty, as Latin was at one time.

For journalism education to ever achieve its proper place in university — for it to be a discipline rather than a jobs program — it must accept journalism's own universality in the modern world, and transcend its origins in a trade school mentality. That means output — requiring every matriculated student to study some journalism — and input — filling the graduate curriculum with the world of information that belongs there. (Romano, 2003, p. B12)

Romano also offered a more tangible solution to journalism education's perceived failings, with a change to the curriculum. He suggested introducing 'comparative journalism', allowing students to examine reportage across the globe. This would suggest to students that ordinary life in other countries, rather than just massacres, can count as news. It would also introduce them to different styles of reporting and show that the definition of news is not how it affects the United States (Romano, 2003, p. B12). These comments reflect those of other academics, such as Terry Hynes, who have called for journalism students to be provided with a greater understanding of the world around them (Hynes, 2001).

At University of California (U.C.) Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism there had been a longstanding tradition of engaging professionals to comment on the new media curriculum. However, it was not until the controversy at Columbia and a change in Berkeley's critics' comments that any real development occurred in the curriculum (Grabowicz, 2002, p. 194).

In the past, professionals' comments on Berkeley had focused on the training of students in genuine reporting and writing skills and sound journalism ethics and practice. Yet in 2002, the criticism went much further to include issues of intellectual property and copyright law, the proliferation of non-commercial media web sites that published their own news stories, and the range of new technologies created at universities that they believed would be as disruptive to journalism and media business models as the internet had been. The critics also put forward the view that the school had failed to motivate their students to be experimental, innovative, and to break out of traditional media moulds and into their own ventures (Grabowicz, 2002, p. 104).

Berkeley's solution was to create a new subject in Weblog design. The course aimed to involve students in the discussion of the media's power, instruct them in the production of stories and be involved in an interdisciplinary venture. Ultimately it was hoped the course would be a valid response to the requests of the critics of the curriculum (Grabowicz, 2002, p. 104).

While U.C. Berkeley's graduate program was encouraging debate in late 2002, only months later a more sinister fate for Californian undergraduate programs was becoming clear. With an economy in crisis, schools across the State were slamming their doors and turning their backs on journalism education. For example, in March of that year, at the College of the Sequoias in Visalia, trustees approved faculty firings that eliminated journalism educators from the ranks ("The j-school joust", 2003, p. 2).

The Californian Newspaper Publishers Association then released information that this was not only the problem of just one university; but that journalism programs and newspapers at both the college and high school levels faced drastic cutbacks and elimination ("The j-school joust", 2003, p. 3). Another telling fact was that U.C. Santa Cruz, the only U.C. campus to offer an undergraduate program, was popular (with three students applying for each available spot) yet unable to pay for itself. The program was funded by charity – money provided from the 'carryover' of the writing department's budget ("The j-school joust", 2003, p. 3).

California's \$35 billion shortfall was not solely to blame for the crisis in the State's undergraduate journalism education. According to *Editor and Publisher* it was the lack of respect within academia and the profession of journalism that was behind the crisis. Only with the support of newspapers could journalism programs continue ("The j-school joust", 2003, p. 3). For this support to be garnered, as other commentators such as Henningham have put forward, the curriculum needed to change.

Reflecting professional practice and encouraging links with journalists was only one way Terry Hynes, dean of the College of Journalism and Communications at Florida University, suggested j-schools could survive and produce work-ready graduates. She wrote that journalism educators must use a 'bifocal lens' looking at both what students need to graduate today and how best to ensure they lead the profession into the future (Hynes, 2001, p. 10). Her thoughts echoed the sentiments of the Berkeley faculty and Mitchell Stephens (2000, p. 64) who wished to produce graduates who could lead journalism in this century and beyond.

To this end, Hynes created a list of 10 challenges for journalism education. These included attracting and retaining quality staff, both professional and academic; ensuring up to date equipment; developing a close relationship between the journalism department and the rest of the university; exposing students to other cultures and countries; and ensuring educators continue to question the nature of journalism (Hynes, 2001, p. 10). Hynes also asked for changes to journalism education to include responses to new technologies.

If we're really keeping one eye on professional journalism practice, we can't help but see the need to constantly balance the basics of good journalism (telling the who, what, when, where, why and how – sorry if that sounds too old-fashioned) with the most useful and appropriate of newspaper/magazine story for online or on air. Early predictions of technologically driven convergence may have overreached, but more and more newspapers seek

journalists who have the versatility and training to prepare their stories for multiple clients. (Hynes, 2001, p. 10)

Harry Rosenfeld, the former *Washington Post* metropolitan editor who directed the Watergate coverage, went further than stating that j-schools need to reflect professional standards. He wrote that journalism education should fill the ethical void left in newspapers through their response to economic and technological changes.

This is the time, therefore, for journalism schools to step into the breach and do what needs doing: to prepare young people entering the field to understand those values that have brought credibility to the American press unequalled by any other nation. (Rosenfeld, 2000, p. 65)

Rosenfeld stated students must be taught to understand the difference between factuality and “puffery”; they must understand the necessities of fairness, impartiality and accurate attribution; and realise the responsibility that accompanies the power to publish. Additions to the curriculum would be necessary to achieve this. One subject Rosenfeld suggested was an in-depth history of journalism in America, providing students with the context for the ethics they would take with them into their professional careers (Rosenfeld, 2000, p. 65). With this style of education, Rosenfeld hoped graduates would either be accepted into the arms of an ethical paper, or, at a less reputable place of employment, be agents for change. “In this way, J schools could stiffen the ethical spine of newspapering at a time when that is very much needed” (Rosenfeld, 2000, p. 65).

While educators and commentators from around the globe write tomes on creating the program which will save the j-school, it is difficult to pin down exactly what journalism education does, or should entail. As the dean of the journalism school at the University of Maryland, Thomas Kunkel, wrote: “There’s no monolithic entity called journalism education, any more than there’s a monolithic ‘African American community’ or a single type of teenage girl. There’s a broad spectrum of programs devoted to journalism and mass communication, as there should be, and they all have a demonstrated validity” (Kunkel, 2003, p. 1).

Kunkel's examination of the top American journalism programs revealed that some offered a full range of degrees, while others offered only postgraduate programs; some were under the mass communication banner, while others were solely journalism focused; some schools had a heavy emphasis on academic research by faculty, others did not; some had centres and a high level of involvement with the profession, others chose to be focused on academia. Despite their differences, in Kunkel's opinion, all the schools were committed to their goals, had an outstanding faculty, made outstanding contributions to journalism knowledge and turned out remarkable journalists (2003, p. 1).

For Kunkel, while defining journalism education and the perfect curriculum may be impossible, the basics must be covered to ensure a high calibre of graduate is produced.

...in my view a journalism program that skimps on its reporting, writing and editing curriculum serves its students no better than a medical school that goes easy on the anatomy lessons. By the same token, a program that doesn't firmly fix these skills within the context of journalism history, ethics and law, or that ignores the impact of new technology, is being just as short-sighted.

(Kunkel, 2003, p. 1)

This commentary, while apparently valid, seems to fly in the face of the comments against journalism basics made by Mitchell Stephens only three years before. Whether a difference of opinion exists or Kunkel believes program changes like the one Stephens suggested went too far, is not clear.

Professor John Merrill taught journalism for 50 years and, in an article comparing 1950s education to that of new millennium teaching, he summed up many of the ideas put forward by educators like Kunkel, Hynes and Romano. He wrote of his problem with communications departments "gobbling up" journalism and having educators who were trying to do everything, leaving students with a scattered and superficial education. He also stated his problem with an overemphasis on technology, preferring the old days when educators discussed ideas rather than things (Merrill, 2000, p. 36).

In an effort to fix his problems with journalism education, Merrill had some suggestions for additions to the journalism curriculum. He wanted a return to instruction in journalism history and to ensure students had an understanding of the 18th century thought that created American journalism. Merrill asked where the courses in the First Amendment and Press Freedom had gone. He was also interested in courses that encouraged students to think and create rather than just digest information. Like Romano, Merrill (2000, p. 37) cried out for courses that compared the American press with systems in other countries and, like Stephens, he asked for courses that encourage creativity with story form and page design. With his years of experience as an educator and a journalist Merrill pointed out a range of problems within journalism education, but judging from the volume and content of the discussion that continues, these problems have not been solved.

For Columbia, in 2004, an announcement was made about the future of its journalism program. It was revealed that a new two year Master of Arts degree would be added to the programs available in the 2005 year. This degree would be a year longer than the journalism school's current Masters of Science degree (Demos, 2004, p. 1) and it is set to expand to include 45-60 students by its fifth year ("The Master of Arts in Journalism Program", 2006).

Columbia also appointed a new dean, Nicholas Lemann. Lemann was a member of Bollinger's taskforce and before his appointment to Columbia, he was the Washington correspondent for the *New Yorker*. Lemann said he hoped to move discussion of journalism education beyond the old debate between teaching practical skills and/or theory. He wanted to create a curriculum that would help students learn the "method of analytic attack" unique to journalists (Casselman, 2003, p. 1). "You should add to graduate journalism education something more like graduate education in other fields," Lemann said (Casselman, 2003, p. 1). He went on further to state that journalists should not only learn basic skills, but also have the intellectual framework in which to apply those skills. Lemann hoped to include courses in a variety of disciplines such as economics and statistics and expose students to in-depth courses in major issues facing

America, taught specifically with the needs of journalists in mind (Casselman, 2003, pp. 1,2). The success of the course with students and employers is yet to be measured.

While educators across the globe grapple with the design of the perfect j-school, the simple yet telling comments of visiting Columbia professor Dale Maharidge should not be overlooked.

We have to remember that no matter how many changes we put in place, we will never graduate students – except for rare and gifted ones – who are ready to drop into a top reporter position at the *New York Times*. After all, programs in music, film and fine arts don't churn out students who become instant Beethovens, Orson Wellses or Faulkners. (Maharidge, 2002, p.110)

2.8.3 Discovering Australian journalism education

While defining journalism education in Australia, or anywhere else, poses many problems, it is easier to look at what the range of Australian journalism curricula involves. Many live up to some of the hopes of Henningham's perfect j-school and the words of Joseph Pulitzer, who wrote about the mysteries of undergraduate journalism education six years before the world's first journalism school opened its doors:

Why not teach ... things which every right minded journalist must aspire to know...? Why not teach, for instance, politics, literature, government, constitutional principles and traditions (especially American), history, political economy; also the history and power of public opinion and public service, illustrated by concrete examples, showing the mission, duty and opportunity of the Press as a moral teacher? Besides this, teach if possible the practical side of newsgathering, news editing, news writing, style, composition, accuracy, everything, even the makeup of a newspaper. It all should be taught. (Cunningham, 2002, p.24).

In Australia, many universities allow students to enrol in subjects from different disciplines. At Bond University it is a prerequisite for undergraduates across all faculties to complete core subjects in communications, philosophy, information technology and

business. However, there is some criticism, from the likes of Henningham, of courses that rely too heavily on theory rather than the practice of journalism. The University of Technology, Sydney, was plagued by employers' suspicions that its curriculum was based too heavily in ideology, with students graduating without grounding in practical journalism. The school has endeavoured to change this perception by expanding its teaching staff to include teachers with current professional experience and close links with industry (Day, 2004).

Employers' criticism of journalism curricula goes further than the practical versus theory debate. Professor Mark Pearson of Bond University narrowed the arguments down this way:

- We don't teach them enough of the liberal arts. / We teach them too much of the liberal arts.
- We don't develop critical minds. / Our graduates are too critical and they ask too many questions.
- We don't give them a world view. / They're all leaving after two years to go overseas.

... the list goes on. The flavour of the month seems to be the suggestion that undergraduates not learn journalism but instead learn history and philosophy at the graduate level. Will someone please advise the critic that there are at least six such programs available? (Pearson, 1994, p. 103)

For Pearson, the solution to the curriculum question is to develop a course which addresses the development of the profession over the last few years.

Certainly we need to equip our students to develop journalism skills across a range of new technologies. But much more than that, they need to be equipped to deal with the contradictions that arise in our changing world such as reporting across cultures, privacy concerns, changing legislation, the new world order and even coming to terms with the small rural community which will continue to support its traditional weekly newspaper well into the next century. (Pearson, 1994, p. 105)

The criticisms of journalism education and suggestions for its improvement are often at odds. Despite the diversity in points of view, the curricula they critique are, in fact, very similar. In his 1997 study, Roger Patching discovered the curricula at the 22 universities he surveyed shared much in common. For Patching (1997, p. 54), the differences in the courses came down to their size and structure, staff, resources, assessment and production outlets for work. Patching reported that 20 of Australia's 38 universities offer undergraduate courses in journalism. Two other universities offer only postgraduate journalism courses (Patching, 2002, p. 1).

There are four groups of courses offered, as identified by Patching. The first are those where there is a concentration on journalism. There are six courses in this group and they offer 10 or more practical or journalism theory subjects in their mainly 24-subject course structure. The next group are those courses which offer between six and nine journalism subjects in the curriculum. This is the largest group, with 11 universities offering this style of degree. The third group consists of three universities which offer less than six journalism subjects in the usual 24-course structure. The final group consists of the two postgraduate only programs in which the University of Wollongong has up to 10 journalism subjects in the 12-subject Master of Creative Arts journalism program and Murdoch University which has five journalism subjects in its six-subject Graduate Diploma course (Patching, 2002, p. 3). This situation has developed since Patching's study. Wollongong and Murdoch now teach journalism subjects in their Communications degrees, with Wollongong introducing an Bachelor of Journalism in 2007 which would place it in Patching's first group.

Patching (2002, p. 3) stated all 22 programs were practical in nature, with the majority showcasing their students' work by producing newspapers and magazines as part of their courses. He narrowed the figures down to either a 60/40 or 50/50 split between theory and practical subjects within the journalism component of the courses (Patching, 1997). A relationship with a local radio station gave students in half the courses practical broadcast experience. All courses encouraged students to take part in a

work experience program during their degrees and one third of universities made this compulsory (Patching, 2002, p. 4).

The courses also addressed new technologies, but in different ways. At the time of the study most were introducing, or had introduced, the latest digital technology in broadcast and print media. Some were producing e-zines – magazines on the internet (Patching, 2002, p. 4).

Patching also found many universities in Australia also taught law, ethics and research subjects. Thirteen of the 22 courses had a journalism law subject, 11 had a separate ethics course, 11 had a research methods subject, but only seven had a separate subject on Australian politics (Patching, 1997, p. 92 p.92).

With universities creating a balance between practice and theory, paying attention to new technologies and teaching their students the ethical implications of their work, it seems they have gone a long way in addressing the differing views of what it takes to create a high standard in journalism education.

However, what Patching evaluated was the effect of producing too many journalism graduates for the number of jobs available. What this researcher's study seeks to uncover is whether there is room in the curriculum for more subjects, rather than room for more graduates. This study seeks to find a place for a different look at journalism; one that addresses the need for creativity, rather than answering the critic's calls for a greater or lesser number of practical or theoretical subjects, concentration on new technologies, or subjects from other faculty areas. This study, through an examination of the views of educators and professionals and an analysis of critiques, seeks to discover creative non-fiction's place in journalism education.

2.9 Creative non-fiction in journalism education

In the academic literature there is very little discussion of creative non-fiction's place in any university faculty or department. In fact a search on a range of databases (with the search terms: "creative non-fiction", or "creative non-fiction" AND education, or "creative non-fiction" AND curriculum) revealed very little about the genre.

Only two databases returned any search results. On Ebsco Megafire Premier, one article emerged that discussed creative non-fiction and curriculum. However, "Suddenly Sexy: Creative Non-fiction Rear-ends Composition" (Bishop, 2003), discussed only how creative non-fiction may be useful in the English composition, rather than journalism, curriculum. The other database which returned results was Educator's Reference Desk. This resource provided articles like "The New Rhetoric Embraces the New Journalism: Applying Creative Non-fiction Strategies to Teaching Freshman Composition" (Forsyth, 1995), which only argued the genre's place in the English department.

Despite the dearth of academic discussion of the issue, a search of American academic sites in Google (search term one: "creative non-fiction" education site:.edu -- search term two: "creative non-fiction" curriculum site:.edu) showed that most American universities, such as Brown, Northwestern and the University of California house their creative non-fiction courses in their creative writing or English departments.

A search of Australian academic sites in Google (search term one: "creative non-fiction" education site:.edu.au -- search term two: "creative non fiction" curriculum site:.edu.au) revealed similar results. For example, it showed that the University of Canberra taught creative non-fiction as part of its Creative Writing 1 class ("UC Courses", 2004). It also revealed the English Department of the University of Melbourne offered a subject — Writing Literary Non-Fiction — in which creative non-fiction was taught ("Writing Literary Non-Fiction", 2004). The University of Queensland offers 'Creative non-fiction — delving into literary journalism', as part of the creative writing department of its Institute of Continuing and TESOL Education ("Creative writing", 2004). The University of Technology Sydney has a subject called '50308 Creative Non-

fiction' as part of its Bachelor of Communication (Writing and Contemporary Cultures) degree ("Creative non-fiction", 2003).

The results of these searches show that creative non-fiction is not easily found as part of journalism education. It also reveals there is a considerable amount of work to be done in raising the discussion of the genre's place in the curriculum within the academic community.

2.10 Investigation of methodological tools

There are a number of ways to determine the effectiveness of a certain journalism subject or curriculum or to determine whether a new area of study should be taught at the university level. As evidenced by articles published in *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* since 1990, the predominant method is a survey of either journalism educators, professionals, students, or all three. There is also some precedence for in-depth interviewing of experts in the relevant area, conducting simple experiments and analysis of course content. No studies looked at introducing creative non-fiction to journalism education.

2.10.1 Use of questionnaire/survey

Of the relevant studies in *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, five used a questionnaire or survey as a major tool in their research.

In 1990, Professor Gerald Stone conducted a study designed to chart the dimensions of the first newspaper class tertiary journalism students would undertake and to seek a model for excellence in the class by distinguishing between courses in nationally recognised writing programs and those which had not received such acknowledgment. His findings were based on a study from 1989 (Stone, 1990).

The independent variables included demographics about the program, the writing course and the primary instructor. Dependent variables included whether a program was accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass

Communications and if students enrolled in the program had won writing awards in the Hearst and Pacemaker national competitions. The study provided background in trends in teaching and assessment of how classes are taught and attempted to search for a model of excellence for the entry level news writing class (Stone, 1990).

Stone began the study by conducting one-hour pre-test interviews with coordinators of the news writing course at 14 journalism programs. Each interviewee was asked about the course and each completed a list of class topics for order of presentations and time devoted to each topic. The pre-test indicated the lists were reasonably inclusive and understandable and identified 24 items for the 'demographics' part of the questionnaire. The following year questionnaires were sent to directors of all undergraduate journalism programs included in the 1989 AEJMC Directory of schools. Questionnaires were sent to 360 schools with a cover letter asking program heads to pass it on to the coordinator or most experienced teacher of the first newspaper class. One follow up letter resulted in a response rate of 48 percent (Stone, 1990, p. 6).

The questionnaire offered a list of 33 subject offerings that may be included in an entry level newspaper class. Respondents were instructed to number the topics from first to last in the order of presentation and include any topics not on the list. The questionnaire also asked coordinators to estimate the number of classes spent on each topic. Demographic information was also requested (Stone, 1990, p. 6). Independently verified through published lists were the accreditation of the program and if students had received awards (Stone, 1990, p. 6).

The study found there was much overlap between accredited schools and award winners and that the size of a program was related to both its accreditation and production of award winning students (Stone, 1990, p. 11).

Seven years later Sonya Forte Duhe and Lee Ann Zukowski investigated the broadcast journalism curricula in the United States. They wanted to determine the current emphasis broadcast journalism programs placed on practical versus liberal arts courses,

understand the opinions of educators and professionals on the right balance between practical and liberal arts courses, and determine whether educators and professionals believe a more practical or more liberal arts curriculum would help students enter the industry and succeed in their careers (Duhe & Zukowski, 1997, p. 6).

Duhe and Zukowski surveyed, by mail, academics represented by chairpersons of broadcast journalism sequences from the Accrediting Council of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communications accredited programs and professionals represented by television news directors from the list of active members of the Radio Television News Directors Association. They randomly selected 60 academics and 260 news directors. Faxes were sent to those who did not respond to the mail-out (Duhe & Zukowski, 1997, p. 7). Sixty percent of the academics and 32 percent of professionals responded (Duhe & Zukowski, 1997, p. 8).

Two similar questionnaires were developed – one for the news directors and the other for the academics. The first section of both questionnaires asked for biographical information and response to questions about the broadcast journalism laboratory experience. The second section asked several questions about types of education that resembled ACEJMC accredited curricula (Duhe & Zukowski, 1997).

Professionals were asked to rank the five curricula included in the questionnaire on how well they believed it prepared students to be successful broadcast journalists, with one being the best and five the worst. They then had to explain their choices. The next question asked them to rank the curricula as to how it would prepare students to obtain their first television news position. In the academic questionnaire, the second section was almost identical to the one professionals received; however, a third question was asked: “Which type of curricula most clearly resembles your own program?” (Duhe & Zukowski, 1997, p. 8)

The study found professionals and academics held similar views on the broadcast curricula, though the reasons for their choices differed (Duhe & Zukowski, 1997, p. 12).

In 1999 Sue Carter, Myung-Hyun Kang and Ralph Taggart looked into the effectiveness of a course in critical incident analysis and the importance of its inclusion into journalism education (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 5). The course and its organisation was evaluated with a six page survey instrument in the third course offering in 1997. The survey included items designed to study the change of students' attitudes and perceptions relevant to the issues raised in the course (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 11). Students were asked simple questions and provided with responses along a five point Likert scale, where one meant strongly agree, five meant strongly disagree and three was neutral. The survey was administered in the first class session as a pre-assessment and during the last class as a post-assessment. The survey also included some open-ended questions to obtain students' responses to the course's interdisciplinary approach (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 11).

Twenty-five students participated in both surveys. From the students' responses the researchers concluded there was a desire for a case study approach to critical incidents and recommended the inclusion of such a subject in journalism programs (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 14).

In 2001 Mark Seamon looked into the teaching of grammar in journalism programs. He asked if these programs treated spelling, punctuation, grammar and AP style as important factors in improving the state of journalism, how they were teaching these skills and if they were being tested in entrance or exit exams (Seamon, 2001, p. 63).

Questionnaires were mailed to 100 colleges and universities randomly selected from a list of American schools represented at the AEJMC conference in New Orleans. Sixty-five questionnaires were returned (Seamon, 2001, p. 63).

The questionnaires asked whether the department used a grammar competency exam as an entrance or exit test, whether there was a universal policy for marking and whether students were required to take a course in grammar and editing. A syllabus was also requested if an editing or media-writing class was required. Descriptive statistics were

calculated for the questions on course and curricula. Like Carter, Kang and Taggart's study, it included Likert scale responses. These were on the extent to which the grading criteria for the media-writing course were used in other journalism classes. The syllabi returned were compared, to reveal how the different programs taught spelling, punctuation, grammar and AP style (Seamon, 2001, p. 63).

The surveys revealed American journalism educators believed grammar was important for journalists and their credibility. They also showed more programs use exams and have at least one media-writing class. However, the study also revealed the way competencies are taught and graded differed greatly from school to school (Seamon, 2001, p. 68).

The following year, Lucinda Davenport, Fred Fico and Margaret H. De Fleur looked into computer assisted reporting (CAR). They asked how many journalism programs taught CAR skills and if those skills were taught in a specific CAR subject or integrated into other courses. They also examined at which student level these skills were taught, why they should be taught and why they are not being instructed in these skills. They were also interested in how journalism programs have changed in the last 10 years and how these programs compare to news rooms in computer assisted reporting (Davenport, Fico, & DeFleur, 2002, p. 10).

This was a study which sought to update research undertaken in 1990 so the authors replicated the methodology of the earlier study. Like other research mentioned previously, this study also made use of AEJMC information. The researchers sent questionnaires to deans, directors, departmental chairs or program directors of 409 American institutions where journalism was noted in the 1999-2000 AEJMC directory. The survey comprised a cover letter and two page questionnaire. Self addressed stamped envelopes were included in the package. Follow-up efforts included reminder postcards, a second survey, emails and telephone calls (Davenport, Fico, & DeFleur, 2002, pp. 10,11).

A response rate of 50 percent was attained with representatives of 206 programs responding. From the data, it was concluded that since 1990, journalism programs had greatly improved their CAR training, although significant gaps remained between education and industry practice (Davenport, Fico, & DeFleur, 2002, p. 18).

2.10.2 Use of in-depth interviews

Mark Deuze, in 2001, sought to identify the challenges for journalism education and advance the curriculum. Rather than turning to a mail-out survey, he chose to conduct 45 in-depth, face-to-face interviews with experts in journalism education. He also based his article on the analysis of European and U.S. literature and further training in five European countries (Deuze, 2001, p. 5). Deuze's exact methodology is not spelled out in his article, however, it is clear his methods provided him with enough information to reach conclusions about journalism education and make suggestions for its improvement (Deuze, 2001, p. 15).

2.10.3 Use of an experiment

In 1999, Byung Lee and George Padgett looked into the effectiveness of ethics courses. They asked if ethics study leads to a moderate decision, what elements could cause that to change; and how students perceived the short-term media ethics study. To answer their research questions and test the four hypotheses they had devised, Lee and Padgett used Rokeach inventories in the 1999 Winter term and 1999 Spring semester before and after the ethics component was covered. A second set of data was retrieved from the same students who gave an extended response to an ethical dilemma case. The responses from the first and second inventories were compared and the case responses analysed (Lee & Padgett, 2000, pp. 34,35).

From their research, Lee and Padgett concluded a full-semester ethics course was desirable. However, a short course on ethics would still help students in logical thinking and thorough decision making (Lee & Padgett, 2000, p. 38).

Later that year the results of a quasi-experiment were published. Julie Andsager and Susan Dente Ross looked at whether increased attention to freedom of expression in a course resulted in students having a broader understanding of First Amendment issues. To measure this, student support for individual and media rights was gauged across a semester in which students took three courses focusing on freedom of expression (Andsager & Ross, 1999, p. 57.58).

A quasi-experimental, untreated control group design was used with a pre-test and a post-test conducted on communication students enrolled in three seminars on free expression. The control group comprised two other communication courses (Andsager & Ross, 1999, pp. 58,59).

To assess student attitudes toward freedom of expression after they had been exposed to a semester on the topic, the researchers calculated the pre-test and post-test mean scores for the free-expression and control conditions. Next, correlations among the variables were examined (Andsager & Ross, 1999, p. 61). From the results, the researchers concluded freedom of expression courses can encourage journalism and mass communication students to consider the connections among their First Amendment rights, but that these positive attitudes do not always result in behavioural changes (Andsager & Ross, 1999, p. 62).

2.10.4 Use of content analysis

The examination of curricula has also been achieved through content analysis. In 2002 Seok Kang, Arnold S. Wolfe and Jong G. Kang sought to compare broadcast journalism curricula in the U.S., the U.K. and Korea (Kang, Wolfe, & Kang, 2002, p. 37). To this end, the researchers sampled three and four-year higher educational institutions in the selected countries. The 100 strong U.S. sample was gleaned from a list of Broadcast Education Association members, the 129 member U.K. sample was taken from Media Courses U.K. and the 37 institutions in the Korean sample was based on the Korean Newspaper and Broadcasting Yearbook (Kang, Wolfe, & Kang, 2002, p. 41). The

study's units of analysis were core, theoretical and practical courses (Kang, Wolfe, & Kang, 2002, p. 43).

The researchers found that each country had its own unique curricula except in one distinct area: all courses required introductory courses in mass and general communication (Kang, Wolfe, & Kang, 2002, p. 45).

2.10.5 The study of creative non-fiction's place in journalism curricula

This study takes into account the methodology used in assessing subjects and curricula in journalism programs and includes in-depth interviewing and survey methodologies.

The following chapter, Chapter 3, explains the methodological procedures used to define creative non-fiction and discover its place in tertiary journalism education. It sets out to describe the use of the different methodologies in the study and the analysis techniques.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

To answer the research questions — ‘What is creative non-fiction?’ and ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’ — a number of different methodologies could be employed. Previous studies that looked into the development and analysis of journalism education relied heavily on a use of questionnaires (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 54; Davenport, Fico, & DeFleur, 2002, p. 53; Duhe & Zukowski, 1997, p. 51; Seamon, 2001, p. 52). Others employed in-depth interviewing (Deuze, 2001), quasi-experiment methodology (Lee & Padgett, 2000) and content analysis (Kang, Wolfe, & Kang, 2002). This study sought to build on the work of the previous researchers by utilising two of these methods: ‘elite’, or ‘in-depth’, interviews and questionnaires.

In Stage One, the definition of creative non-fiction found in the literature was refined using elite interviews with creative non-fiction professionals. This stage was created to answer the first research question: ‘What is creative non-fiction?’ In the first phase of Stage Two, the second research question – ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’ – was addressed through a second round of elite interviews, this time with journalists who had also written creative non-fiction. In the second phase of Stage Two, the second research question was further answered through a census of Australian tertiary journalism programs.

3.2 Stage one: Uncovering the definition of creative non-fiction

While all the studies listed above (and more comprehensively described in Section 10 of the Literature Review) addressed curricula, only one spent any time dealing with a research question similar to the first one in this study – ‘What is creative non-fiction?’ This was the work of Carter, Kang and Taggart (1999) in the area of critical incident analysis. They wrote, “Before introducing the course on critical incidents analysis it is

necessary to define what an incident is...” (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 5). To this end, Carter et al.(1999, p. 5) reflected the literature in the area, citing the work of one expert and his definition of the term. Their next step was to widen the definition to suit their academic purpose, stating their definition derived from their understanding of world events and the public’s reaction to them (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999).

In this study a definition also needed to be rendered. From previous analysis of the area, (see Section 5 of the Literature Review) and from reading of works of creative non-fiction, it was possible to reach a preliminary definition of the genre. Most previous definitions of creative non-fiction, formulated by critics, academics, writers and anthology editors, differ only in matters of terminology rather than on an intrinsic level. This can be seen in the following table:

TABLE 3.1 *Definitions of Creative non-fiction*

Author	Definition
Chip Scanlan (2003a, p. 2)	Creative non-fiction includes personal essay, memoir, literary journalism, academic/cultural criticism, narrative history, feature articles, documentary drama.
Donna Lee Brien (2000, p. 1)	Creative non-fiction includes, but is not restricted to, memoir, fictionalised biography, autobiography, and other life writing, some literary/New Journalism, the ‘creative essay’, innovative self-aware critical fiction and forms of experimental and narrative/dramatised history writing.
Rita Berman (1997, p. 5)	Creative non-fiction includes feature articles, memoirs, essays, personality profiles, travel pieces, how-to’s and even contemporary, political, or other social issue pieces includes feature articles, memoirs, essays, personality profiles, travel pieces, how-to’s and even contemporary, political, or other social issue pieces.
Bill Roorbach (2001, pp. v-vix)	[Creative non-fiction includes] literary diaries and journals, literary memoir, the personal essay and literary journalism, narrative writing, literary travel, the science essay and creative cultural criticism.

From the work of Scanlan, Brien, and others, a list of publishing styles was created for the purpose of further analysis of the genre. The list includes most styles mentioned in the literature and omits only styles that were either redundant (for example both New journalism and literary journalism would not be needed, nor would personal and creative essays) or were not based on the truth (an idea supported in the literature, see Section 7 in the Literature Review).

Publishing styles of creative non-fiction:

Literary journalism, feature articles, memoir, biography, personal essay and narrative history.

To define creative non-fiction accurately, it was also necessary to identify hallmarks or features of the genre. These were also taken from the literature. Through Section 5 of the Literature Review a number of features of the genre were cited by several different scholars. The most comprehensive of these was from Lee Gutkind. He wrote that theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation and point of view were all factors that came together to produce a work of creative non-fiction (Gutkind, 1996, p. 27). Gutkind also stipulated that creative non-fiction must adhere to the facts (Forche & Gerard, 2001), and capture the personal and the private to make the story mean something significant to a larger audience and affect readers in a compelling and unforgettable way (Postel, 2003).

Creative non-fiction:

A. Is based on facts and does not fabricate places, people or events.

B. Uses theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation, point of view.

C. Includes personal and/or private moments with the intent to both provide readers with an understanding of the significance of the event and affect them emotionally.

3.2.1 Elite interviewing

While the creation of a definition via the literature is supported by a previous study (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999) an extra step must be taken to ensure its reliability. This step involves the conduct of in-depth interviews with elites and is necessary as this entire study is based on an agreed understanding of creative non-fiction. There is precedence for this method in curricula study, as can be seen in the in-depth interviewing conducted by Deuze (2001).

Elite interviewing differs from other interview styles as it focuses on respondents who are selected due to their expertise in the area of research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 94). In this case, experts selected included four faculty members at the ninth annual Mid-Atlantic Creative Non-fiction Summer Writer's Conference held at Goucher College in the United States. This was the premier conference in the field of creative non-fiction and was known for selecting respected, well-published authors and educators as faculty members ("Creative nonfiction", 2002, p. 3). Another expert, this time from Australia, was selected as she is respected in her field and is knowledgeable about the state of creative non-fiction in this country. During interviews, the elites were asked to provide their own definitions of creative non-fiction, asked for their responses to the literature-derived definitions, and other genre questions.

Elite interviewing was particularly useful in answering the first research question as the respondents had a wide knowledge of creative non-fiction through their professional and academic work (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 94). While elite interviewing is an advantageous method, as it offers knowledge and inside information from experts, there have been a number of disadvantages identified (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 94).

Steinar Kvale (1996, p. 101) wrote that access to elites often poses a problem. However, in this study, this was not an issue as elites responded favourably to a discussion of their area of expertise. Kvale (1996, p. 101) stated the interviewer should be well informed about the research topic to ensure a successful interview. As this

researcher was well grounded in the genre through an analysis of the literature and other data pertaining to creative non-fiction, this problem was also overcome.

Questions which would provide both nominal and operational definitions of creative non-fiction were formulated for the interviews. While a preliminary definition had been created through the literature, it was decided that it should not be shown to the elites until they had provided their own definition of the genre. This decision was made to ensure that the interviewer did not unduly influence the elites with her preconceived ideas about creative non-fiction. The interviews took approximately 20 minutes and elites were encouraged to express any views they wished on creative non-fiction. Allowing the elites to pursue their own interests and explore their passions revealed new and broader conceptualisations of creative non-fiction.

The interviews with the four American elites were held in the United States. The interview with the Australian elite was held over the telephone due to constraints on the elite's time and availability. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder.

3.2.1.1 Data analysis of elite interviews

Data analysis is a crucial stage of any qualitative research project. There are many analysis methods and they are useful in answering an array of different styles of research questions. Three commonly used data analysis methods are grounded theory, conversation analysis and semiotics. Yet these methods were not drawn on as they were inappropriate for this study.

A grounded theory approach was not utilised as this study was not looking to explain the processes by which people come to understand creative non-fiction. Instead, the aim was to formulate a definition of creative non-fiction, to understand the relationship between two genres of writing and to learn the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education (Jeon, 2004, p.250).

Grounded theory was also not an applicable method as this study was at no stage attempting to develop a substantive theory (Jeon, 2004, p.250). Instead, this research was designed to identify and understand the nature of creative non-fiction and its impact on journalism education.

Conversation analysis was not appropriate as this method seeks to understand the way people relate through oral communication. This understanding is reached through close scrutiny of conversations, even noting the length of pauses in speech down to tenths of a second. This was not a suitable method for this study as the focus was on finding the place of creative non-fiction in the journalism curriculum, not on the way people discussed the issue (Babbie, 2001, p. 364).

Semiotics, often connected to content analysis, looks into meanings and messages behind symbols and signs. Like conversation analysis, this method is not applicable to this study as the aim is not to find the meaning in depictions of genres of writing, but to use elite interviews to divine the place of a genre of writing in an educational discipline (Babbie, 2001, p. 362).

The data analysis approach taken in this study is of a more general qualitative kind, than those utilised in the three methods explained above. This study incorporated the general qualitative analysis approach outlined by Miles and Huberman (1995). They suggested data analysis involve three steps. The first is 'Data Reduction' where the data is focused or simplified into transcripts (in this case the words of the elites were transcribed). The second is 'Data Display' where the information is organised and compressed into a more accessible format. Miles and Huberman (1995, pp. 10,11) suggest the use of a range of diagrams, and in this study, conceptual maps and Venn diagrams were chosen to display data. The third step is 'Conclusion Drawing and Verification'. At this point the researcher will have reached preliminary conclusions about the data, and must now verify those conclusions. This verification can occur in a number of ways including re-examination of the complete set of data, and through

analysis of it in context with the wider discussion on the issue (Wietzman & Miles, 1995, pp. 10,11).

In this study, the first step in data analysis involved taking the recorded elite interviews and transcribing them into a Microsoft Word document. These documents are kept on file by the researcher and as all the respondents to the elite interviews agreed to waive confidentiality the transcripts are available for perusal.

After transcription, the interviews were transferred into the N6 (formerly NUD*IST) qualitative analysis program. N6 was chosen because it is designed for easy management and flexible analysis of text data (International, 2003) and because it is said to be one of the best designed programs available and is user friendly (Wietzman & Miles, 1995, p. 238). It was also chosen because four of the key aspects of the software fulfilled the requirements of processing the results of elite interviewing:

- Automating clerical tasks with command files that speed processing.
- Rigorous management of ideas and codes.
- Asking questions and finding fast answers.
- Seeing patterns, searching and confidently reporting. (International, 2003)

The transfer of the Microsoft word documents into the N6 programs occurred under the names of the elites. Their responses were then put into 'nodes' which can represent concepts or categories. Four main nodes were created: definition (how the elites defined creative non-fiction), biography (what genres of writing the elites had published), styles (what publishing styles the elites discussed) and truth (elites' beliefs on the truth). These nodes were at the top of a 'node tree' with subcategories emanating from each one – this creates a hierarchical tree-like pattern (which looks similar to a family tree). This tree structure allowed relationships between concepts to be both revealed and discovered (Richards & Richards, 1994, p. 457). The nodes used for this study became the categories for analysis discussed in Chapter 4.

Taking the different topics raised in the interviews and putting them together under the nodes allowed for easy comparison between the elites' views and between the newly developed nodes. These comparisons revealed reasons behind the elites' responses and allowed for an understanding of the relationships between the techniques and publishing styles of creative non-fiction.

3.3. Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative non-fiction

The next, and crucial, research question asks 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' Following the work of the previous researchers listed above, this first phase of the second stage of the study sought to determine if creative non-fiction is journalism through elite interviewing. Then, in the second phase of Stage 2, an analysis of creative non-fiction in journalism education and the views of journalism educators was conducted through a census.

3.3.1 Phase 1: Elite interviewing

While the refinement of a definition of creative non-fiction was a product of a review of the literature and interviews with elites, another step needed to be taken before a survey of journalism educators could be carried out. This step was determining whether creative non-fiction is journalism. This was necessary because unless creative non-fiction's relationship with journalism was understood, the question – 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' – could not be answered. The search for this relationship was exploratory, thus elite interviewing was again employed (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 90).

The choice of subjects was made through examining the work of writers who had produced works of creative non-fiction and were professional, well published journalists. Their publications were then compared and four writers displaying a range of skills and achievements were selected. As with the previous stage of the study, a data voice recorder was used to record the interviews which took around 30 minutes on average. Three of the interviews were conducted by telephone due to the distance between

researcher and the elite, or at the elite's request. One interview was held face to face in the office of the researcher due to the availability of that elite.

Following the success of the previous stage of research it was decided to continue to follow the analysis methods it had utilised. This meant this stage of interviews was also transcribed into Microsoft Word and then imported and categorised using the N6 software program. Again the program fulfilled its function, enabling the creation of categories for analysis and an easy comparison of the categories.

3.3.2 Phase 2: Census of journalism programs

3.3.2.1 Survey method

The next step in assessing the place of creative non-fiction in journalism education was to canvass the opinions of educators and the content of their courses. Rather than elite interviewing, or another method, a questionnaire was chosen as the most appropriate instrument. This selection was made as questionnaires allow a survey of a large group of people in a smaller amount of time than interviews or direct observation, and due to the time constraints and limited budget of this study, it was preferable to choose an expedient method.

Questionnaires also added a quantitative element to the study and allowed for a statistical analysis of the results. This was particularly achievable in this study as the small number of university journalism programs in Australia allowed for a census rather than a survey of a chosen sample of schools. The choice was also made to follow the decision by Stone (1990), Duhe & Zukowski (1997), Seamon (2001) and Davenport et al. (2002), to survey educators through a self-administered questionnaire.

A census differs from other surveys because there is no need for concern with sampling error. A census involves the collection of information from every member of a group or population – in this case every practical tertiary journalism program in Australia identified by the Journalism Education Association. In order to reduce time and cost,

surveys which attempt to study larger groups – for example Australian university students – need to sample members of the population which will then represent the entire population and involve calculation of sampling errors in doing so (de Vaus, 1986, p. 52; Floyd & Fowler, 1988). A census avoids the problem.

A questionnaire is the instrument of a survey methodology. This method is a type of data collection and is a system for collecting information about people to compare, describe, or explain their attitudes, knowledge and behaviour (Fink, 2003b, p. 1). Data collection can also encompass case study and experimental methods. Case study method is not relevant in this study, as it involves data about only one case, and to answer the research question, more than one opinion needed to be garnered. Similarly, an experiment is not appropriate as any difference between the attributes of people is created by the intervention of an experimenter (de Vaus, 1986, p. 6).

There are a range of common criticisms of surveys (census or other kinds), many of which are not relevant to this study, or can be answered by sound practices. These include philosophical criticisms, such as the suggestion that surveys cannot adequately establish causal relations between variables (Alreck & Settle, 1995, p. 6). It is also said that they are unable to take context into account or find meaningful aspects of social interaction; they neglect the role of human consciousness, lack creativity and are empiricist. Other criticisms are based on technique, suggesting surveys are too restricted because they rely on highly structured questionnaires and that surveys reduce questions to incomprehensible numbers and are too statistical. Finally there is the ‘political’ criticism that survey research is intrinsically manipulative (de Vaus, 1986, pp. 7,8).

While there are those, like de Vaus (1986) who disagree with these criticisms and believe survey design can reduce the chances of faulty causal inferences, many of them are irrelevant to this study. This is because the research question — “What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?” — requires a more descriptive and analytical, rather than explanatory, research plan (de Vaus, 1986, p. 11).

Despite this, this study seeks to answer many of the criticisms of surveys through careful design, execution and analysis.

3.3.2.2 Research aim

To uncover creative non-fiction's place in journalism education it was necessary firstly to identify what, if any, of the genre's skills were already taught in journalism programs and why. The next step was to canvass educators' opinions of creative non-fiction and whether it was worthwhile to isolate the skills attributed to the genre into a single subject, or to continue to teach them in separate classes. What publication styles this subject may include (literary journalism, memoir, literary essay etc.) also needed to be queried.

3.3.2.3 Data collection method – emailed questionnaires

As questionnaires are used to collect data that are unavailable or cannot be readily observed they were particularly useful in performing the tasks listed above. Questionnaires can be filled out by respondents or be administered as part of in-person or telephone interviews (Lewis-Beck, 1994, p. 2).

Face-to-face and telephone interviews allow for more information at a greater complexity than self-administered questionnaires, so for this reason they are preferable for many studies. However, due to time constraints and the nature of the information required from the respondents in this case, a great number of complicated responses would not have been a positive result for this study, or for the researcher. The use of self-administered questionnaires also eliminated the need to spend time organising to meet subjects for an interview at a time that suited them (Lewis-Beck, 1994, p. 3).

In this case, an emailed questionnaire as a word document attachment was sent to respondents asking them to email the questionnaire back when completed. There were a range of reasons for this choice, as outlined by Colorado State University:

Cost-savings: It is less expensive to send questionnaires online than to pay for postage or for interviewers.

Ease of Editing/Analysis: It is easier to make changes to questionnaires and to copy and sort data.

Faster Transmission Time: Questionnaires can be delivered to recipients in seconds, rather than in days as with traditional mail.

Easy Use of Preletters: You may send invitations and receive responses in a very short time and thus receive participation level estimates.

Higher Response Rate: Research shows that response rates on private networks are higher with electronic surveys than with paper surveys or interviews.

More Candid Responses: Research shows that respondents may answer more honestly with electronic surveys than with paper surveys or interviews.

Potentially Quicker Response Time with Wider Magnitude of Coverage: Due to the speed of online networks, participants can answer in minutes or hours, and coverage can be global. ("Strengths and weaknesses of electronic surveys", 1997, p. 1)

Colorado State also identified a list of weaknesses of this method, however, many of these are easily overcome ("Strengths and weaknesses of electronic surveys", 1997, p. 1).

TABLE 3.2 *Email questionnaires: problems and solutions*

Problem ("Strengths and weaknesses of electronic surveys", 1997, p. 1).	Solution
Sample Demographic Limitations: Population and sample limited to those with access to computer and online network.	This was not an issue as the educators surveyed had access to the internet.
Lower Levels of Confidentiality: Due to the open nature of most online networks, it is difficult to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.	These questionnaires were not designed to be anonymous. This decision was made because the identity of the institutions which offer aspects of creative non-fiction provided useful information for the study's conclusions.

Layout and Presentation issues: Constructing the format of a computer questionnaire can be more difficult the first few times, due to a researcher's lack of experience.	This is in part true, however, the problem was overcome with help of an expert in the area.
Additional Orientation/Instructions: More instruction and orientation to the computer online systems may be necessary for respondents to complete the questionnaire.	This would certainly be true for people unfamiliar with sending and receiving email attachments. However it was assumed senior staff at universities would have had a great deal of experience with this method of communication.
Potential Technical Problems with Hardware and Software: As most of us (perhaps all of us) know all too well, computers have a much greater likelihood of "glitches" than oral or written forms of communication.	This is a valid concern, but to minimise the effect of technical problems, the researcher kept a log of any error messages or returned mail and sent extra questionnaires accordingly.
Response Rate: Even though research shows that e-mail response rates are higher, Opermann (1995) warns that most of these studies found response rates higher only during the first few days; thereafter, the rates were not significantly higher.	Any increase in response rate over another method was appreciated in this study.

Lewis-Beck (1994, p. 3), identified mailing as the only type of self administered questionnaire. This is possibly because 12 years ago email had not swept the world and become a more popular form of business communication than even the telephone (Hendery, 2004). Lewis-Beck also wrote that the disadvantage of mailed questionnaires is the low and differential response rate. Some people fail to return questionnaires, others fail to receive them. Problems also arise when respondents fill out questionnaires

incorrectly, do not answer all questions, respond the way they hope the researcher wants them to, or ask someone else to do it for them (Lewis-Beck, 1994, p. 3).

Lewis-Beck's concerns were a factor in this study even though this survey was conducted via email. This is because problems of receiving, returning and filling out the questionnaire are the same as they would be if the instrument had been sent by mail.

Despite this, Lewis-Beck's last two problems listed were not a major factor in this study, as the questionnaire was emailed to prominent educators who, judging from their positions at their respective institutions and understanding of research, were not particularly likely to fabricate their responses (although this is not to say that all university lecturers are beyond reproach). It also follows that considering Floyd and Fowler (1988, p. 55) wrote, "... the task will be easier [for the respondent] if the sample is composed of motivated, well-educated individuals," the chances of incorrectly filled-out questionnaires were not great.

Furthermore, the problem of low response rate was also not a significant issue in this study. Not only were the normal strategies employed to reduce non-response, but unlike surveys which are often performed on people who have no interest in the topic of research, the respondents in this study, as journalism educators, had a vested interest in the results (Floyd & Fowler, 1988, p. 55).

A range of non-response strategies are available. Those suggested by Floyd and Fowler (1988, p. 54) fall into two categories. The first pertains to the ease with which the instrument can be completed.

1. The task should be clear.
2. The questions should be attractively spaced, easy to read, and uncluttered.
3. The response task itself should be easy. Do not ask respondents to provide written answers, except at their option. The response task should be to check a box or circle a number or some other equally simple task. (Floyd & Fowler, 1988, p. 54).

The second range of strategies concerns the researcher's repeated efforts to contact non-respondents.

1. About 10 days after the initial mailing, mail all the non-respondents a reminder card, emphasising the importance of the study and of a high rate of response.
2. About 10 days after the postcard is mailed, mail the remaining non-respondents a letter again emphasising the importance of a high rate of return and including another questionnaire for those who threw the first one away.
3. If the response rate is still not satisfactory probably the best next step is to call non-respondents by telephone. (Floyd & Fowler, 1988, p. 54).

These six strategies were all relevant to this study, although an email rather than a postcard follow-up was adopted as it was both easier and more in keeping with contemporary practices. The omission of an email option from Floyd and Fowler's suggestions is undoubtedly because their work was published before the popularity of e-mail was established.

Floyd and Fowler (1988, p. 55) also suggested methods of writing the postcard so as to preserve the respondent's anonymity. However, this was not relevant as this study was not anonymous.

3.3.2.4 Sample design

While follow-up procedures are important, the survey must first be constructed. This most often begins with the sometimes complicated task of defining the sample frame (Floyd & Fowler, 1988, p. 20). There are a range of sample designs that can be employed: random, convenience, stratified, unstratified clustered and unclustered (Alreck & Settle, 1995, p. 41). Within each of these choices are a number of factors which can make or break research. These are factors that the journalism researchers who used questionnaires, such as Stone (1990), Duhe & Zukowski (1997), Seamon (2001) and Davenport et al. (2002), had to take into account. This is where this study breaks away

from these efforts and moves closer to the work of researchers like Roger Patching (1997, p. 3).

In his study of tertiary journalism curricula, Patching surveyed all vocational courses offered at universities where journalism was taught as part of an undergraduate degree, postgraduate degree, or diploma program. These did not include media studies courses, communication studies programs, or similar courses focused on an academic approach to journalism. His study also did not include private journalism colleges (Patching, 1997, p. 19). While Patching narrowed his study to ignore certain courses, this was a decision based in defining the courses relevant to his study, rather than a sampling choice.

In this study an identical choice was made. This study looked at vocational/practical university journalism courses as they are focused on producing graduates with practical journalism skills and creative non-fiction is a practical, not theoretical, genre of writing. As explained above, with this choice made, the issue of sampling became irrelevant. Like Patching (1997, p. 20), the ability to survey all courses enabled the study to be a census of courses rather than a survey of a sample of courses. It can be assumed that the American researchers listed above were forced to rely on samples (and then make inferences about the population from their findings) because a census of the hundreds of journalism courses in the U.S. would make the study extremely time consuming and well beyond the budget of most institutions.

3.3.2.5 Instrument

A survey instrument, in this case a questionnaire, must be reliable and valid (Fink, 2003b, p. 47). There are a number of ways to ensure reliability (the consistency of information gathered). These include test-retest reliability, internal consistency, equivalence and inter-rater reliability. In this study reliability was tested by internal consistency. Internal consistency is the extent to which all the questions in the instrument assess the same quality, skill, or characteristic (Fink, 2003b, pp. 47-50). This choice was made as the other methods were either irrelevant or beyond the scope of this study. Test-retest reliability and equivalence were not possible to test as there was not the time, nor the

funds, to conduct the survey more than once, nor was the population large enough to test different members of the group each time. Inter-rater reliability was not necessary as only one researcher was involved with the study (Fink, 2003b, pp. 48-50).

Validity is the extent to which a study measures what it is intended to measure. Ways to assess validity include criterion validity, content validity and construct validity (de Vaus, 1986, p. 47). However, de Vaus (1986, p. 49) wrote there is no ideal way of determining validity and the method should be chosen for the situation. With this in mind, only content validity was chosen as a measure for this research. Content validity measures the extent to which the indicators measure the different aspects of the concept. As this test relies on strict definitions of the concepts, it was utilised in this study (de Vaus, 1986, p. 48).

Criterion validity compares the responses from the current study to previous well-established surveys (Fink, 2003b, p. 51). This is not a measure this study employed as there was no evidence of any previous surveys of educators' views on creative non-fiction and Patching's (1997) study on curriculum was not useful as it contained only open-ended questions. Construct validity is based on how well the measure conforms with theoretical expectations (de Vaus, 1986, p. 48). As this is an exploratory study and not one based on a concrete hypothesis, this was not a useful approach.

To maximise the effectiveness of the survey, the construction of the questions was based on suggested best practice in the area as outlined by Alreck and Settle (1995, p. 112).

- A. Focus very precisely. Every item should zero in very directly on one, specific issue or topic.
- B. Keep each item brief. The longer the question, the greater the response task and the more error and bias.
- C. Strive for clarity. Every respondent must know what's being asked.
- D. Use "core" vocabulary. Use the same words as the least sophisticated respondents would use in common speech.

- E. Use simple sentences. Two or more simple sentences are far preferable to one compound sentence.
- F. Avoid specific sources of bias or error. Be sure items are free from the factors that create bias and error.
- G. Use structured questions. Unstructured items ordinarily provide large quantities of poor quality data.
- H. Classify answers carefully...
- I. Choose appropriate categories. Be certain they're neither too broad not too narrow, too many nor too few.
- J. Use scaling effectively. (Alreck & Settle, 1995, p. 112).

The decision was also made to use both open and closed questions. Closed questions are easy for the respondent as they reduce the time taken to answer the questionnaire and are easy for the researcher as they are simple to code. However, closed questions do not allow respondents to qualify the reasons for their choices. For this reason both formats were included in the questionnaire (de Vaus, 1986).

The questionnaire also asked respondents to offer their opinions of certain teaching and publication styles through a ranking system. This would allow the respondents a simple and time-efficient method of expressing how they viewed one variable in comparison to others. Ranking systems are particularly useful methods of ascertaining the feelings of respondents in a way that is possible to analyse quantitatively. Respondents typically find it easy to say what they do (shop, travel, teach etc.) but find it much more difficult to say how they feel about an issue. Rating scales are widely used in questionnaires and are an uncomplicated way of asking respondents for their opinions. Ratings also offer simple and adaptable analysis and provide comparability across time (Brace, 2004, pp. 78,79).

Likert scales were also used to gauge the respondents' attitudes to creative non-fiction and traditional journalism. These scales were used because they are simple to use in self-administered surveys, whether they are paper or electronic. In a Likert scale, respondents

are given scores for each statement to choose from, normally from one to five, negative to positive. This produces interval data which can be used to calculate standard deviations and means for each statement (Brace, 2004, p. 86). In this study it was decided that due to the small number of respondents (the representatives of the universities with practical focused journalism departments identified by the JEA) it would be better to have a scale of 10 points rather than five, as this would produce richer data with a wider range of responses to analyse.

Rensis Likert, the inventor of the scale, intended that the sum of the scores would be calculated to provide an overall attitudinal score for each person. However, this is rarely undertaken in modern commercial research, nor is this a necessary step in this study, because the statements cover a range of attitudes and the individual responses are of great interest (Brace, 2004, p. 86).

The last of the survey questions asked not for a written response but for any teaching materials, curricula information and book lists available to be sent to the researcher. These materials provided additional information to answer the second research question – ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’.

After deciding on the questions and format for the questionnaire, a pre-test was carried out. This is an important step as almost every questionnaire could be changed in some way to make it easier for respondents to meet the researcher’s objectives (Floyd & Fowler, 1988, p. 103). The pre-test was conducted with two members of Bond University’s journalism department based on their similarity to the future respondents in background and skills (Fink, 2003b, p. 107). They were asked to fill out the questionnaire and review each question on a number of criteria:

What does the question mean to the respondent? Is there a better way of asking it? What do the response choices mean? Given a choice between two types on response formats, which is better? (Fink, 2003b, p. 107)

3.3.2.6 Data management

Once the instrument was created, pre-tested and amended accordingly, all questionnaires were mailed to the respondents' staff email addresses at their respective institutions. Data management began with the first returned questionnaires (Fink, 2003b, p. 113).

While some respondents sent back their surveys via email within a number of weeks, other respondents took considerably longer. In some cases, up to six follow-up emails were sent to remind respondents that the survey had not yet been returned. In one case, the choice of respondent had to be changed as the initial head of department identified refused to complete the survey on the grounds that he did not know enough about the program to answer the questions. It was also necessary on three occasions to ask two senior members of the researcher's department's faculty to approach the respondent on the researcher's behalf. This was because these senior faculty members had established relationships with the respondents and could therefore encourage them to respond to the survey. Given the need for this study to qualify as a 'census' and avoid the complications of sampling error, a representative of every practical journalism program had to complete the survey. The surveys were emailed to respondents on Monday July 11 2005, and the last survey was returned on Monday March 6, 2006.

The task was then to prepare the data for entry into a computer program. According to Floyd and Fowler (1988, p. 127) the process of coding or data reduction involves five phases:

1. Formatting or organising the data.
2. Designing the code, the rules by which a respondent's answers will be assigned values that can be processed by machine.
3. Coding, the process of turning responses into standard categories.
4. Data entry, keying the data onto cards, tapes, or disks so the analytic software can read them.
5. Data cleaning, doing a final check on the data file for accuracy, completeness and consistency prior too the onset of analysis.

These steps were followed with the choice to enter data to disk made at phase four in line with SPSS software requirements.

3.3.2.7 Data processing and analysis

The purpose of this stage of the study was to answer the research question – ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’ – through analysing the results of the survey. Following Floyd and Fowler’s (1988, p. 127) instructions, the data was entered into an analytical software program (SPSS) to aid in the analysis.

After the choice of software, the analysis was guided by the following aims (Fink, 2003a):

- Describe the backgrounds of the respondents.
- Describe the responses to each of the questions.
- Thematically categorise the responses.
- Create comparisons of responses and respondents.

The analysis of the open-ended responses to the survey followed the Miles and Huberman (1995) general qualitative approach that was used for the elite interviews. To that end, the qualitative data was reduced, displayed and conclusions were drawn and identified (Wietzman & Miles, 1995, pp. 10,11).

3.3.2.8 Problems faced

It was suggested to the researcher by a statistician that the questions on techniques and publishing styles include a ranking system. It was suggested this would reveal not only what variables the respondents selected, but also how they believed variables stacked up against each other. An example of the ranking system is below:

5. At your institution which of the following ‘traditional’ journalism writing techniques are taught for at least one hour per year as part of the journalism curriculum?

(Please check the box if the technique is offered and, in addition, rank the techniques in order of importance: 1 being least important and 6 being most important).

TABLE 3.3

Technique	Check	Rank (1-6)
The inverted pyramid structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paraphrasing for attribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use of quotations	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Write the way you speak	<input type="checkbox"/>	
News voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (please stipulate):	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Unfortunately the ranking system did not live up to expectations. The problem with the system did not arise in the pre-tests – the respondents at that stage completed the survey using the ranking system as it was designed. This suggested to the researcher that problems would not be encountered in the survey-proper. Regrettably this was not the case. Difficulties revealed themselves in the first questionnaire returned. Rather than ranking each technique or style in the manner below (Table 3.4) revealing which variables were the least important (1) to most important (6), the respondents ranked the variables in the opposite order (with 1 as the most important and 6 as the least important), they used a ranking a multiple number of times (Table 3.5), or a combination of the two.

TABLE 3.4

Technique	Check	Rank (1-5)
The inverted pyramid structure	X	5
Paraphrasing for attribution	X	4
Use of quotations	X	1
Write the way you speak	X	2
News voice	X	3

TABLE 3.5

Technique	Check	Rank (1-5)
The inverted pyramid structure	X	4
Paraphrasing for attribution	X	4
Use of quotations	X	1
Write the way you speak	X	2
News voice	X	3

This meant that it was impossible to use the ranking system. Fortunately, the qualitative elements of the survey provided the comparisons of variables the researcher had hoped to analyse.

3.4. Representation of findings

The findings of this study are discussed in the following chapters, but they are also represented pictorially. This study includes conceptual maps, Venn diagrams and pictorial representations. Conceptual maps were used to reveal concepts and how they related to other concepts (Marchinko, 2004, p. 6). The Venn diagrams were used to show how families of ideas or concepts overlapped (Gray, 2004, p. 405). Finally, pictorial representations were employed to summarise key ideas and the relationships between them. These representations incorporated the use of metaphors for ideas and used arrows or boxes to show relationships ("Pictorial representation", 2000).

CHAPTER 4

Stage 1: Defining Creative non-fiction

4.1. Introduction

As creative non-fiction is a relatively new term in Australia, a clear definition had to be developed so the genre's place in journalism education could be reliably ascertained. In fact, this step is so important that it was chosen as the study's first research question: 'What is creative non-fiction?' This stage of the study sought to answer that question.

Through the Literature Review and reading of works of creative non-fiction, a preliminary definition of the genre (see Section 2 of Chapter 3) was reached. However, while the creation of a definition via the literature was supported by a previous study (Carter, Kang, & Taggart, 1999, p. 3), its reliability had to be ensured. This step in the research process was reached using the methodology of elite interviewing and was vital because this entire study was based on an agreed understanding of creative non-fiction. There is precedent for this method in curricula study, as can be seen in the in-depth interviewing conducted by Deuze (2001).

Elite interviewing was chosen for this study because it is a form of in-depth interviewing which taps into the decision makers, rather than the consumers – in this case the writers and educators of creative non-fiction rather than the readers or observers. Elite interviewing was also chosen as it emphasises the interviewees' understanding and definition of the topic at hand and reveals what they believe is relevant (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004, pp. 8,9). Considering that this stage of the study was about definitions, elite interviewing was the most appropriate methodological choice.

The accomplished writers chosen as elites for the study were Lee Gutkind, Bill Roorbach, Rebecca Skloot, Mark Rotella and Donna Lee Brien. The first four elites were selected due to their experience in the area of creative non-fiction and their selection as members of the faculty at the 2004 Mid-Atlantic Creative Non-fiction Summer Writers'

Conference in Maryland, USA. Donna Lee Brien was selected as the other elites were American, and as an Australian, Brien offered a view on the genre in this country. She was also one of the few Australians who, at the time of the interviews, were not only aware of creative non-fiction, but were also active in producing and discussing the genre.

To report the data analysed, conceptual maps showing the relationships between categories have been used to reveal their interconnectedness and flow. Conceptual maps are used primarily as a tool to provide a visual method of representing a concept and how it relates to other concepts (Marchinko, 2004, p. 6). The use of these maps, in some circumstances, showed relationships that had not yet been considered in the study.

4.2 Elites' qualifications for inclusion in the study

Lee Gutkind

Lee Gutkind was recently credited by *Harper's Magazine* as the founder of the creative non-fiction movement (Creativenonfiction.org, 2005). He has received numerous awards and honours including an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters by Chatham College, Steve Allen Individual Award by United Mental Health, Inc., the Meritorious Service Award by American Council on Transplantation, the Howard Blakeslee Award by the American Heart Association for 'outstanding journalism' and he was the recipient of a National Endowment of the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship. He has written long and short works of fiction and non-fiction, including text books, and has frequently worked as an editor. Gutkind is Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

Bill Roorbach

Bill Roorbach is an award winning American author of both fiction and non-fiction work. He is a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow (USA), a Kaplan Foundation Fellow and the winner of a 2002 O. Henry Award. His short story collection, *Big Bend*, won the Flannery O'Connor Award in 2001. He has written seven other books including the creative non-fiction textbook, *Writing Life Stories*, and was the editor of *Oxford Anthology Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: The Art of Truth*. He has also written

shorter non-fiction for a range of magazines and papers including *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Granta* and the *New York Times Magazine*. Roorbach was recently awarded the Jenks Chair in Contemporary American Letters at Holy Cross College, Massachusetts.

Rebecca Skloot

Rebecca Skloot is a freelance writer and life sciences contributing editor at *Popular Science* magazine. She has written feature stories, essays and reviews for *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Wilson Quarterly* and many others. Her first book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, will be published by Crown/Random House in 2006.

Mark Rotella

Mark Rotella is an editor at *Publishers Weekly* and his work has appeared in many newspapers and magazines including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *St. Petersburg Times*, and *The Village Voice*. He has also published the creative non-fiction work *Stolen Figs: And Other Adventures in Calabria* which was named a Best Travel Book of 2003 by *Condé Nast Traveler* and selected as part of the Borders Original Voice series.

Donna Lee Brien

Donna Lee Brien is the senior lecturer in Writing, Editing and Publishing at the University of New England in New South Wales, Australia. She has published numerous academic and other articles in the areas of creative non-fiction, biography, history, art history and fiction. She has an MA and PhD in Creative Writing both by creative work plus exegesis. Brien has also published in Australia on supervising the creative arts research degree. From 2000 to 2004, Brien was the Founding Editor of Queensland University of Technology's journal *dotlit: The Online Journal of Creative Writing*.

4.3. Interview results: Questions posed

The elites were asked questions in two sections, the first examined the definitions of creative non-fiction and the second looked at the genre's publishing styles. The American elites were interviewed in-person in the USA. Donna Lee Brien was interviewed by telephone. The questions posed followed a pre-organised list; however, elites were encouraged to speak to their own passions and interests and often new questions were raised due to these responses. The conduct of the interview is more fully explained in Chapter 3. The elites' responses were categorised using the N6 program to allow for easy category development, comparison and data searching. See Appendix 1 for a flow chart of the questions and their origins.

4.4 Writing approaches and techniques

The elites were asked firstly to explain what they regarded as creative non-fiction's techniques and were then asked if they agreed with the following definition derived from the literature which was read to them, or shown to them on paper or email, in its entirety.

Creative non-fiction

A. Is based on facts and does not fabricate places, people or events. B. Uses theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation, point of view. C. Includes personal and/or private moments with the intent to both provide readers with an understanding of the significance of the event and affect them emotionally.

The answers to these questions offered insights into a definition of creative non-fiction that the literature had been unable to provide. New ways to describe creative non-fiction emerged through this process and became categories for analysis using the qualitative analysis methodology outlined in Chapter 3. The categories to emerge from the data in the analysis process were: creative non-fiction as an art form, quality, creativity, structure, narrative, writer's point of view, character, fiction writing techniques, specific techniques, emotion, truth and what is not creative non-fiction.

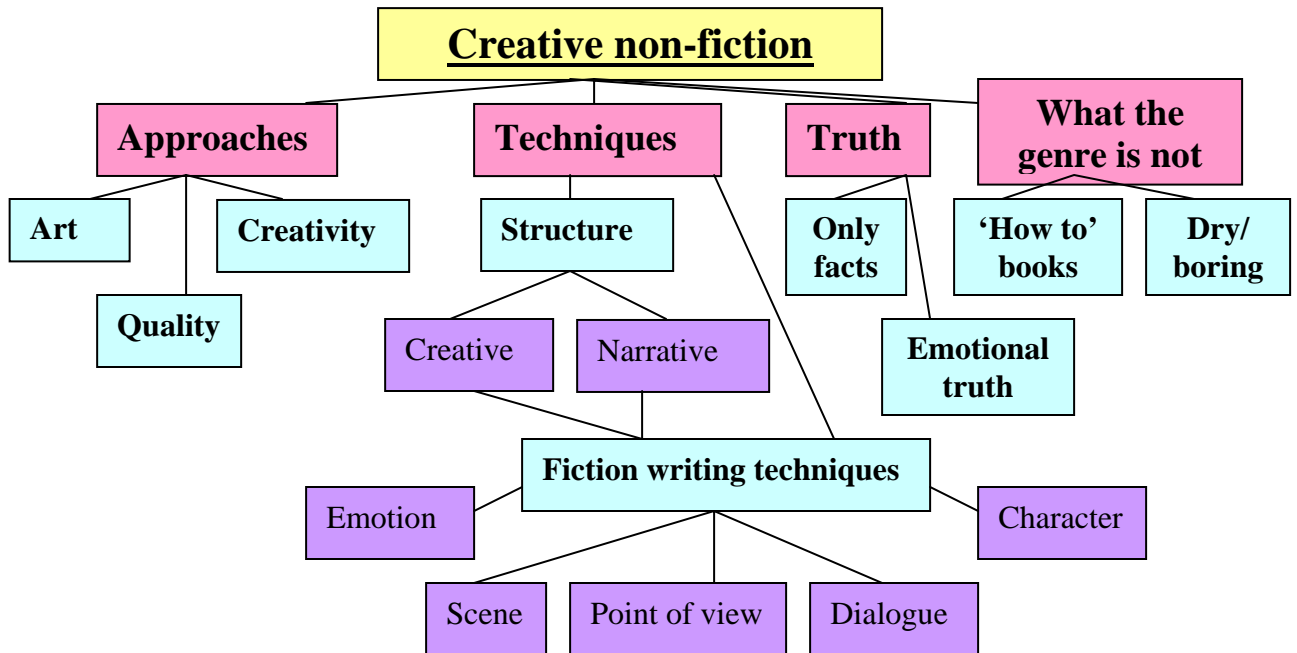


FIGURE 4.1

The new ways of describing creative non-fiction as outlined by the elites. These became categories for analysis.

4.5. Categories explained

4.5.1 Approaches

The first three categories to emerge were not so much techniques, as approaches to writing. These were the idea of creative non-fiction as art, and issues of quality and creativity.

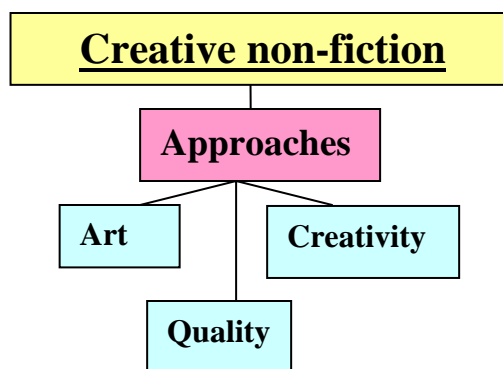


FIGURE 4.2

Approaches to writing

4.5.1.2 Creative non-fiction as art

The elites stated that creative non-fiction is a genre which aspires to something greater than a regurgitation of the facts, that it is, in fact, ‘art’. While this was not a defining feature that had been mentioned in the literature-derived definition, there had been some precedent for the idea that creative non-fiction goes beyond the facts to find a deeper meaning.

When the former head of the journalism program at RMIT, Mathew Ricketson (2004, p. 236), described literary journalism, one of the predecessors and styles of creative non-fiction, he stated it finds “... the underlying meaning’. Mark Masse (1995) wrote that creative non-fiction transcends fact-based journalism to take the work to the next level. Lee Gutkind foreshadowed his responses in his elite interview in a number of articles. He had stated creative non-fiction takes situations and makes them significant to a wide audience and provides readers with not only the facts but reflection on those facts (Postel, 2003, p. 100) (Gourley, 2003, p. 2).

During the interviews it became clear that Bill Roorbach shared Gutkind’s belief that creative non-fiction differed from other genres of writing because of a link to something greater:

Creative non-fiction I think of as non-fiction that aspires to art. All other non-fiction is also wonderfully creative, but its aspirations are different; they’re equal but different. So, journalism aspires to information (but there are other things too), academic writing aspires to analysis or the furthering of knowledge. But creative non-fiction first and foremost aspires to art. It may aspire also to information and education, but first and foremost, it aspires to art. (Roorbach, 2004)

These thoughts are echoes of Roorbach’s statements in the introduction of *Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: The art of truth* (2001), the title of the book even revealing much about his views on the genre. In the book he explained how traditional journalism falls outside creative non-fiction:

The traditional journalist, famously, must write for a public with a 12-year-old's reading ability. His words must operate inside a formula. And inside the particular restrictions of his field, the journalist may be a genius, and his work of the highest quality. But he, and with him his language, is not aspiring to art, but to other purposes... But that's not to say some journalists and some academicians and some writers of all the other sorts of non-fiction (perhaps even some writers of lawn-mower operating manuals) don't make art at times or in specific instances. (2001, p. 4)

During his interview, Gutkind agreed the driving force behind creative non-fiction was its aspiration to be more than an information provider. He explained it this way, I'll define creative non-fiction if you define poetry for me. Some things are beyond definition, that's why I ask someone to define poetry or art itself. We [creative non-fiction writers] create art. The best is something new, not something old, not something you can define. How, in 1928, before Picasso, would we have defined art? Considering that Picasso made such incredible changes. You'd never ask a poet to define poetry. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 1)

Mark Rotella and Rebecca Skloot also stated creative non-fiction is defined by its aspirations. Rotella (2004, p. 1) said, "I would also say that it [creative non-fiction] is something that is greater than itself, that goes beyond the subject." Skloot (2004, p. 1) agreed: "There should be something deeper... there is a larger point."

The idea that writers' aspirations can define a genre is interesting. While it is certainly possible that when the elites and other critically acclaimed authors such as Joan Didion, Gay Talese, or Tom Wolfe, sat down with the notion of creating a work of art they succeeded, there are many more authors whose work is less than artful. This is why listing an aspiration as a defining feature of a genre of writing is difficult – not only is it virtually impossible to know a writer's intent just by reading their work, but often writers produce work which goes beyond the facts to reach a deeper meaning, without necessarily having these aspirations. However, it is possible to see that a genre of writing

is ‘artistic’ that it is, as Merriam-Webster’s *Collegiate Dictionary* states, “showing imaginative skill in arrangement or execution.” Using the term ‘artistic’ is, therefore, the way this study’s definition of creative non-fiction will include this approach.

4.5.1.3 Quality

While creative non-fiction may be an art form, the elites stated that it is high quality art. They made the distinction between what they called quality writing – work that was written using literary techniques and utilised structure, dialogue and scenes – and all other writing. Gutkind again reflected some of his earlier comments during his interview. In 1998, he rejected criticisms of creative non-fiction, stating not only were the criticisms inaccurate, but they were also written badly. He referred readers instead to the writing in the journal *Creative Nonfiction*, which he said provides examples of high quality writing (Gutkind, 1998).

During his elite interview Gutkind went further to point out that because of creative non-fiction’s quality it is an easy genre to locate:

You find [creative non-fiction] across all the major, high profile magazines across the United States, like *Vanity Fair* and *Esquire* and the *New Yorker* and *Harpers*. You find it to a lesser extent in the medium to lower end magazines – there will be less creative non-fiction in them than there will be in *Esquire* and hardly any in *Good Housekeeping* or *TV Guide*. It’s an interesting thing. The higher the profile and the higher the quality of the magazine the more the creative non-fiction that you’ll find. The lower the quality, the more straight journalism. (2004, p. 2)

The issue of quality was also raised by Rotella and Skloot. Rotella (2004, p. 1) said creative non-fiction is writing that achieves its goals, “Creative non-fiction is anything that succeeds in conveying what it’s meant to.” This means that it uses creative techniques to produce work that is engaging and is unlike some work which he described as ‘dry’.

Skloot outlined her point of view on the genre's quality when she compared literary journalism and memoir:

... there isn't any difference between any of the stuff as long as you're writing non-fiction and you're writing it well. And anyone who is writing non-fiction should be using the techniques that we're talking about. (2004, p. 1)

The use of these techniques, and therefore the quality of the writing, was raised by Skloot when she referred to her own work.

For me I would consider my work in magazines and newspapers, everything I've done [to be creative non-fiction], because even in a 500 word story I try to incorporate the techniques of creative non-fiction. Usually in a 500 word story I'll have at least one character or a theme, I'll have something that is no different to when I'd write a 3,000 word feature story for a magazine. It all goes back to the fact that I like good writing, writing that can capture a moment and bring it to life for someone, that can give you something vivid to latch on to. (Skloot, 2004, p. 1)

While the quality of writing is subjective to a point, literary criticism does provide basic hallmarks of great writing. It is through using these hallmarks that the quality of creative non-fiction can be and is judged. For the elites and other educators and critics of the genre, judgements are made on a piece of writing based on a range of criteria, including the use of fiction writing techniques, creative structures and the ability of the work to engage the reader on an emotional as well as an intellectual level.

Using the criteria above, it is not only possible to determine if a work is creative non-fiction because of its quality, but also to decide whether a work is an example of good creative non-fiction or an example of good writing which falls outside the boundaries of the genre. For example, using these criteria (which are explored further in Section 5.2 below) a reader can determine in just the first few paragraphs that while the excerpts

below are both examples of quality writing, only one is creative non-fiction.

Briefly, it is possible to note that the first example below contains the first person and begins to describe two characters, where the second example uses the third person ‘news voice’ and is written to inform the reader about a situation, rather than to tell them a story.

1. *Frontiers* by Chuck Palahniuk – example of creative non-fiction.

“If everybody jumped off a cliff,” my father used to say, “would *you*?”

This was a few years ago. It was the summer a wild cougar killed a jogger in Sacramento. The summer my doctor wouldn’t give me anabolic steroids.

A local supermarket used to offer this special deal: if you brought in fifty bucks worth of receipts, you could buy a dozen eggs for a dime, so my best friends, Ed and Bill, used to stand in the parking lot asking people for their receipts. (2004, p. 92)

2. *Big Splash out of fashion* by Jason Clout – example of what falls outside the definition of creative non-fiction.

Splashing around in the backyard pool may sound a good way to spend summer but don’t count on it adding value to your property. In fact, the sight of a glistening money-eater can be a big turn-off.

Agents say most buyers are not worried if a property has a pool.

But it’s a rare buyer who is prepared to pay extra for one. (2005, p. 5)

4.5.1.4 Creativity

The idea of quality was echoed when another layer of the definition emerged, that of the importance of creativity in creative non-fiction. The elites used the term ‘creativity’ in relation to writing. This idea is explained simply in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

Whether it takes the form of poem, short story, novel, play, personal essay, or even biography or history, creative writing is certain to involve some search for meaning, a measure of wonder and discovery, and a degree of personal involvement in the result... Unlike the expository writer, the creative writer

uses language plastically, for its suggestiveness and power of sensuous evocation. (Encyclopædia, 2005)

While the literature does not widely discuss creativity in writing it was a notion important to two of the elites. Donna Lee Brien stated she believed there was no creative non-fiction without a focus on creativity.

To talk about the way it's written I'm probably very along Lee's [Gutkind] and many of the other theorists' lines that it is a creative way of writing non-fiction... it's the non-fiction part that's important, the creative part is the means to that. (Brien, 2004, p. 1)

Rotella agreed. "There is much non-fiction that is written really well. And if it conveys whatever it is meant to convey, if it succeeds in doing that, then it is creative because I think that there needs to be creativity coming out" (Rotella, 2004, p. 1). However, he did add that quality alone does not mean a work can be included under the genre's banner: "Just because it's good doesn't mean it's creative non-fiction" (Rotella, 2004, p. 1). Instead, it is the bringing together of all the elements of the genre – such as its aspirations, creativity and quality – that makes a piece of writing creative non-fiction.

4.5.2 Techniques

The next series of categories revealed in the interviews were the techniques employed when writing creative non-fiction. These techniques are what fill the creative non-fiction writer's toolbox, and evidence of their use makes it possible to categorise a piece of writing as part of the creative non-fiction genre.

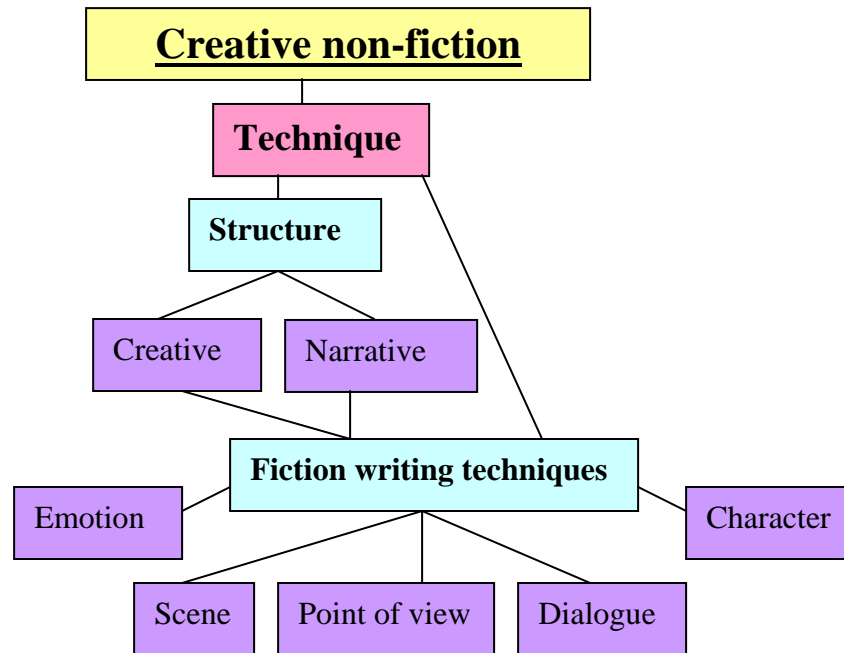


FIGURE 4.3

Techniques of creative non-fiction

The figure above shows the relationships between the different techniques of creative non-fiction. The creation of this table revealed that while structure and fiction writing techniques had been seen as separate categories in this study, they are actually interdependent. A piece of writing cannot be creative non-fiction without having a narrative or creative structure, nor can it be a part of the genre if it does not use one or more of the techniques (in purple) of fiction writing. What became clear through this table is that creative and narrative structures are fiction writing techniques, even though they merit individual study and recognition in this chapter due to their importance in creative non-fiction.

4.5.2.1 Structure

The way creative non-fiction is structured emerged as part of its inherent creativity and the use of certain structures is a hallmark of the genre. These concepts were raised in two areas during the interviews. The first was a discussion on employing a creative structure and the second was the use of narrative.

- **Creative structure**

The elites' use of the term 'creative structure' built on their notion of creativity. It specifically referred to creative non-fiction's rejection of the inverted pyramid (most important facts first, followed by the next most important in descending order (Stephens, 1997, p. 246). The pyramid, which is seen by the genre's practitioners as only informing readers of facts, was rejected in favour of structures which reflected the theme of the story and engaged readers on emotional and intellectual levels.

A creative structure was a vital part of creative non-fiction for Skloot. "I think any good writing uses a creative structure to get its point across. Part of the art of writing it [creative non-fiction] is structure" (Skloot, 2004, p. 1). For Skloot (2004, p. 1) the definition of the genre is a simple blend of its parts, "For me anything is creative non-fiction if it's true and uses creative techniques."

Rotella stated this consideration of structure has led to the genre's success. "I can read really good journalism that's straight out reporting. But again, some of the best journalism does have a sense of structure to it rather than just a conveyance of facts. The structure of the piece doesn't have to be a conventional structure" (Rotella, 2004, p. 1).

This use of creative structuring has been noted in the literature. Kramer called it 'plot' (Kirtz 1996, p. 2), Masse (1995) called it the 'use of dramatic scenes', as did Nelson (1990, p. 20), but despite these different names, the idea is the same – that creative non-fiction uses a structure beyond the inverted pyramid which reflects the theme and style of the story.

- **Narrative**

Another layer was added to the structure issue when the elites discussed narrative as a defining feature of creative non-fiction. The word 'narrative' comes from the Latin *narrare* — to tell the particulars of an event — and in this context narrative refers to the notion of storytelling (Woo, 2000, p. 16). From a literature standpoint narrative can be in many forms (short form non-fiction, literary essays, book sized memoirs or biographies,

etc) but almost always includes characterisation (the people in the story), setting (the time and place the story occurs) and a plot (the writer's structure for the story) (Malless, 1988, pp. 14,15).

In terms of narrative journalism, or creative non-fiction, the director of the Nieman Narrative Program at Harvard University, Mark Kramer, described narrative succinctly and comprehensively:

At a minimum, narrative denotes writing with (A) set scenes, (B) characters, (C) action that unfolds over time, (D) the interpretable voice of a teller -- a narrator with a somewhat discernable personality -- and (E) some sense of relationship to the reader, viewer or listener, which, all arrayed, (F) lead the audience toward a point, realisation or destination. (Kramer, 2005a)

When using the term, Skloot referred to the nature of the narrative structure – the way a plot is developed to engage a reader. While a writer may use the simple chronology of an event in his or her work, the narrative scope also allows them to structure the piece in different ways as long as the feeling remains that a story is being told.

Skloot stated the use of narrative was an integral part of creative non-fiction.

It has to have a story, it has to have a narrative. Like 'how to' books, you can write them creatively, but no matter how you do it, I would never consider it creative non-fiction. But biographies can definitely be written as creative non-fiction, but biography has a whole art. But I think creative non-fiction is any non-fiction that has a story to it, a narrative. (Skloot, 2004, p. 1)

This use of narrative is often mentioned in the literature and links creative non-fiction with other literary genres (see Section 4 of the Literature Review). It is also known through the simpler term of 'storytelling'. Chip Scanlan (2003a, p. 2) wrote that creative non-fiction is a new term for "fact-based writing that is best understood as the union of storytelling and journalism." Mark Kramer (2000, pp. 2,3) also spoke of a marriage of sorts between journalism and "storytelling techniques" which can be used in any news

story. At a narrative journalism conference it was also raised that this storytelling style was the best way to reach readers (Kirtz, 1988, p. 3). The term ‘storytelling’ also links the idea of narrative structure with the next part of creative non-fiction – fiction writing techniques.

4.5.2.2 Fiction writing techniques

The other major element of creative non-fiction is the way it draws on the techniques of the fiction writer. These techniques are varied and numerous, but include the use of description, dialogue, point of view and characters (Surmelian, 1969, pp. v,vi).

The use of these techniques is what truly makes creative non-fiction different from hard news reporting. To understand this difference it is often easiest to look at examples from both genres – hard news reporting and creative non-fiction. Below is an excerpt from an article which is an example of hard news. It was published in the *Melbourne Age* with the headline ‘Hard Punches Killed Baby, Court Is Told’ (Gregory, 1993). The other example is a sample from a piece of creative non-fiction in *Time* magazine called ‘How we lost Daniel’s life’ by Helen Garner (1993). The two pieces about the murder of a horrifically abused child by his step-father show some of the differences between hard news reporting and creative non-fiction.

The differences include:

Creative Non-fiction	Hard news reporting
The use of the writer’s point of view – “I think it’s because Daniel’s fate was not confined within the pathology of his fractured family” (Garner, 1993, p. 27).	Use of the ‘news voice’ of an objective third person – “Daniel was also found to have two broken collarbones and up to 104 bruises on his body” (Gregory, 1993).
The use of a descriptive narrative structure.	Use of the inverted pyramid.
The creation of characters that the readers can visualise and empathise with.	The reference to a person’s name and their relevance to the story.
The use of dialogue.	The use of paraphrased or short quotes.

Asking why something did or did not occur.	Only reporting what has transpired.
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Examples:

Hard News: ‘Hard Punches Killed Baby, Court Is Told’ by Peter Gregory

A man accused of the murder of his wife’s two-year-old son had punched the boy several times in the stomach so hard that he died soon after, a Supreme Court jury was told yesterday.

Mr James Morrissey, QC, prosecuting, said Daniel Valerio could not be revived when he was rushed to hospital after Mr Paul Aiton, then 30, punched him on 8 September 1990.

Mr Morrissey said a postmortem showed that Daniel died from internal injuries to the abdomen caused by severe blows. He said the injuries were in the nature of those suffered in a severe traffic accident.

Daniel was also found to have two broken collarbones and up to 104 bruises on his body.

Mr Aiton, formerly of Swans Way, West Rosebud, has pleaded not guilty to the murder of Daniel Valerio.

Mr Morrissey said Mr Aiton had developed a hatred for Daniel after moving in with Daniel's mother in the middle of 1990. Mr Aiton told a former girlfriend that he hated Daniel, and boasted to his workmates about the brutal, dangerous and sadistic practices that he had used on Daniel... (Gregory, 1993)

Creative Non-fiction: ‘How we lost Daniel’s life’ by Helen Garner

What sort of a man would beat a little boy to death? Paul Aiton, 32, sentenced in Melbourne last Friday for the murder of Daniel Valerio, is a very big man, a tradesman who wears colourful shirts, thin ties and boots that have decorative chains; but at first, in the dock, he looked oddly like a child himself. On his heavily muscled body, with its overhanging belly and meaty hands, sat the round, hot-cheeked face of a boy who’d been sprung, who was

in serious trouble, but who glared back at the world with eyes that sometimes threatened to pop out of his head with indignation and defiance.

Often his head, with its moustache, its reading glasses, its hair cropped short in front and curling over the collar behind, would be invisible behind the dock, where he appeared to be doodling or taking notes... (Garner, 1993, p. 23)

In the literature, the use of fiction writing techniques is one of the most common overarching themes raised when defining creative non-fiction. In 1997 Rita Berman (p. 5) identified that creative non-fiction incorporates fiction writing techniques and three years later Gutkind (2000, p. 1) stated that the genre utilises techniques usually employed by poets and fiction writers. Ricketson (2004) and Kramer (2000) used a different wording for the same range of techniques, describing them as those of a novelist rather than a fiction writer.

The inclusion of these techniques in the definition of creative non-fiction was particularly important to Skloot during her interview.

My definition of creative non-fiction is writing that is true; non-fiction writing that is presented creatively, that uses the techniques of fiction or film or whatever — that uses dialogue, character, action — the things that are not often thought as being present in non-fiction. The things that fall under the creative non-fiction bubble, really for me it's any non-fiction that's written well and uses these kind of techniques. (Skloot, 2004, p. 1)

Rotella (2004, p. 1) agreed in his succinct definition of the genre: "Creative non-fiction is something that pays attention to story, to plot, to structure, to style and incorporates many of the elements of fiction."

Creative non-fiction's relationship with fiction as a defining factor, and one that explains much of the genre's relationship with the truth, is a topic Brien also found pertinent.

The people who definitely wouldn't define themselves creative non-fiction writers would be historians, a lot of biographers, probably journalists. They would say that through their research and through their objectivity they are approaching that representation of what happened. Now what is interesting about the creative non-fiction writer is they're doing exactly the same thing but they're not afraid of using the grab bag of forms and techniques and methods of representation... the more imaginative, creative, what we could term fictional end. But they are still approaching the same goal of finding 'what happened'. (Brien, 2004, p. 1)

During the process of creating a literature-derived definition of creative non-fiction for this study, key techniques usually associated with fiction writing were identified:

B. Uses theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation, point of view.

These were presented to the elites for their comment. With virtually no criticism, the elites agreed these techniques were a defining part of the genre. Gutkind (2004, p. 1) wholeheartedly agreed as he stated "Yes, yes and yes," when presented with the entire definition. Rotella (2004, p. 1) also simply stated that "Yes," he agreed.

Roorbach (2004, p. 1) considered changes, but in the end was positive about the definition when he said, "You could say 'use tools of the novelist' which is one way to think about it, which is basically what 'B' is saying." Brien (2004, p. 2) was also in agreement, but added a qualifier: "Yes, that is true but not all authors use them to the same extent." Skloot, however, added that structure should be added to the list of techniques as she believed quality stories utilise creative structures.

Two of these fiction writing techniques — the use of the writer's point of view and the use of character — were singled out as particularly important by the elites. These techniques have also been isolated in the literature. As such they were included in the definition.

- **Writer's point of view**

The fiction writing technique of point of view is a way creative non-fiction stands apart from traditional hard news reporting. In literature, point of view “is the presentation of a particular scene through the eyes of one or more characters. It is the writer’s device for opening up a character to the reader” (Forrest, 1997, p. 22). In the case of creative non-fiction, this is the writer’s way of channelling the story through their own perceptions. Experts in the narrative/creative non-fiction area have described this device as “use the first person ‘I’” (Berman, 1997, p. 5) use of “point of view” (Berner, 1986, p. 9) and in more complicated ways, “use the authorial rather than the institutional voice” (Ricketson, 2004, p. 236) and “wants/needs to revel in a subjective approach” (Brien, 2000, p. 3).

The use of the writer’s point of view in creative non-fiction differs from the ‘news voice’ of hard news, because, while the former tries to filter events through the eyes of the writer, the latter aims to write the story without any clear bias, opinion or personality. Mark Kramer (2005a) described the hard news method this way: “The standard news-voice is the voice of a beneficent bureaucracy -- the speech of informative sentinels on the walls of the city, issuing heads-ups to citizens (‘A fire yesterday at 145 Elm St. destroyed . . . damage is estimated at . . .’).”

During her interview Brien stated creative non-fiction’s use of point of view can be overlooked by readers. “I think it is quite true to say about all creative non-fiction that the first person point of view of the ‘I’ is either totally explicit or totally implicit... and that’s another one of my reasons of why readers really like creative non-fiction” (Brien, 2004, p. 3).

Brien also pointed out it is the use of this personal point of view that lends credibility to creative non-fiction. She stated that unlike some journalism where there is no by-line, or some historical writing where the author writes as if omnipotent, creative non-fiction writers lay bare their biases and the limits of their understanding.

And some of that more pure non-fiction is almost written as if it’s universal, even though it’s written by one person and analysed by one person it’s almost

like ‘this is what’s happened, and this is what everyone would think happened’. Whereas the creative non-fiction writer really says ‘this is what I think’. And I think this is very honest and very truthful because you can say ‘this is what Lee [Gutkind] thinks, this is what Molly [Blair] thinks, this is what Donna thinks’, without pretending. And with the acceptance of all the individual subjectivity that would therefore inform that. So that part is probably left out by certain definitions. (Brien, 2004, p. 2)

Skloot also discussed the importance of the personal voice as a hallmark of the genre and as a way to bring more characters into each story. “It’s also the ability to use I, which is a big difference from what has gone before and different to newspaper journalism” (Skloot, 2004, p. 1). Although it is clear that there are many examples of creative non-fiction in newspapers, Skloot is referring to the traditional news stories which employ news voice and dominate many papers.

- **Character**

This use of character was another technique singled out during the interviews. In fiction, characters are created from the imagination and rendered on the page to be as ‘real’ to the reader as possible (Grenville, 1990, p. 36). In non-fiction, even though the characters are already real people, the creative non-fiction writer’s job is not dissimilar to her fiction writing colleagues. The creative non-fiction writer does not, like a traditional hard news reporter, simply mention someone’s name and their title, report what they said and then move on to the next piece of information. In creative non-fiction, the writer must help the reader to understand who the person is, what he or she looks like, sounds like and how he or she interacts with other people. Like in fiction, a reader of creative non-fiction must be able to have an emotional reaction to the characters that populate a story; the people they read about are not simply there to add an extra piece of information or expert testimony on a particular subject.

This idea is demonstrated by the experience of creative non-fiction and text book writer Suzanne Paula. She once wrote a literary essay about her grandfather and

submitted it to Lee Gutkind for publication. He responded with a letter which she reported as saying, “But I have no idea what your grandfather looks like, talks, anything” (Miller & Paula, 2004, p. 15). Paula has admitted this was a real error in her work and she should have included enough details for the reader to understand her grandfather (Miller & Paula, 2004, p. 15).

Mark Kramer (2005a) noted the difference between hard news and narrative styles of non-fiction is that while creative non-fiction describes a whole person, “in the world of news-voice, people are citizens, not characters, and they are reduced to ‘civic traits’: addresses, ages, arrest records, voting district and precinct locations, official hospital conditions and military statues.”

The use of character is particularly important to Skloot, who said there are no tales without characters to populate them.

To me, anytime you write about characters you are writing about personal and private things. So to me, characters are key when you write creative non-fiction. So yeah I agree with C [includes personal and/or private moments with the intent to both provide readers with an understanding of the significance of the event and affect them emotionally], but that’s just what characters do. It is possible to write creative non-fiction without characters, but I am personally a character driven writer and so all of my stuff does that. (Skloot, 2004, p. 1)

This use of character is also identified as important in the literature. This idea was perhaps best summed up by Roy Peter Clark who stated that instead of the ‘who’ which is important in hard news, writers should now be thinking in terms of character (Kirtz, 1988, p. 4).

4.5.2.3 Emotion

Part C of the literature-derived definition stated that creative non-fiction includes “personal and/or private moments with the intent to both provide readers with an understanding of the significance of the event and affect them emotionally.” In their responses to this part of the definition the elites revealed that it is not actually important to include personal moments. Instead it is eliciting an emotional response from the reader that should be the focus. This idea is backed up by the literature through Mark Masse’s (1995) comment that creative non-fiction uses dramatic scenes to engage the reader’s emotions.

Brien stated that the use of emotion in creative non-fiction makes it special.

The emotion is also a really interesting part of creative non-fiction and I’m not in any way degrading pure, attentive, less creative non-fiction writing or non-creative non-fiction writing, but I think it’s the inclusion of the emotional resonance, the personal point of view, the revealing of emotion, which many authors find a little disturbing and a little uncomfortable. But I think it’s the strength of creative non-fiction that authors are not afraid to reveal that emotional side and I think that readers really respond to that because that’s very human. (Brien, 2004, p. 2)

Brien’s thoughts on emotion were heralded by her previous statements that creative non-fiction focuses “on material which deals with emotional content in a way that texts which aim to be totally objective may not be able to do” (2000, p. 3).

Roorbach made his passionate views on emotion evident when he discussed the truth.

I just do what I have to do to deliver a true story with all the emotional truths and that might include all kinds of articles and novelistic techniques, but I’m trying to get to a truth that is both literal and emotional ... theme, drama and emotion are paramount. (Roorbach, 2004, p. 2)

According to Roorbach, some of the worst writing in the world is written by historians, while the work written by historical novelists can be some of the best writing found. Roorbach (2004, p. 2) found this particularly worth noting as these authors cover the same basic material, “Historians are very jealous of the novelists who make more money, who get the truth, the emotional truth of history.” To Roorbach it was clear – to produce works which are successful in terms of quality and popularity, an interesting vital story with emotional truth will win out over a bland regurgitation of the accepted facts every time.

The point was made by Rotella that while creative non-fiction writers include personal and/or private moments with the intent both to provide readers with an understanding of the significance of the event and affect them emotionally, they also use other methods to elicit an emotional response in the reader. Skloot was narrower in her approach, as she said that emotion came down to use of character. Gutkind added little to the discussion, simply agreeing with the literature-derived definition.

Calling them by a slightly different name, Kramer (2000, p. 8) summed up what sets creative non-fiction writers, such as the elites, apart from those dedicated to hard news, “Hardboiled reporters don’t routinely seek to engineer the sequential emotional responses of readers. They don’t mess much with their readers at all. Storytellers do.”

4.4.5.3 Truth

This use, or misuse, of the truth is another important facet of creative non-fiction. Much of the literature for and against the genre focuses on how its practitioners treat the truth (see Section 7 of the Literature Review). The literature essentially agrees that while the genre may be creative in many of its approaches, it should be literal in its treatment of the facts. This is not something the elites necessarily agreed with.

The way the elites approached the question of truth spoke to their backgrounds more than any other response they gave. Those with a journalistic background like Skloot had

much tougher approaches than those of people with more diverse writing histories like fiction author Roorbach.

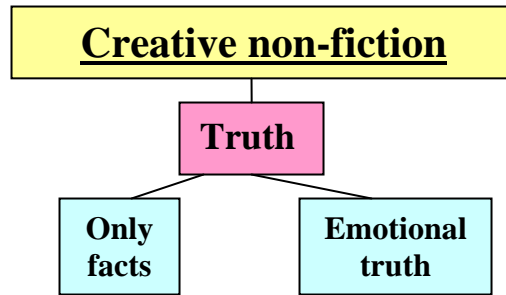


FIGURE 4.4

The way the truth is treated in creative non-fiction

While most of the elites agreed the truth must win out over artistic principles, Roorbach had a very different view. When asked what was the difference between his creative non-fiction, his fiction, and other writing, he offered this response: “I’m trying to get to a truth that is both literal and emotional and I’ll always err on the side of the emotional truth and I’ll always err on the side of art” (Roorbach, 2004, p. 2).

Roorbach then went on to delineate between publishing styles of creative non-fiction.

I’m not a journalist. I’m writing a memoir. Readers are smart, they know what memoir is, they know that memories are faulty and I trust the reader to understand that when I reproduce dialogue and stuff that I can do given faulty memory and a sense of what my family would say to make it a true story. (2004, p. 2)

This issue of memory and its links to fabrication was also raised by Gutkind,

I would never say to you that I haven’t made up anything, because, when I recreate something that happened to me 22 years ago, I mean how do I know what I said 22 years ago? How do I know what I thought 22 years ago? So it’s an approximation of what happened. And so one could say, ‘well then, you made it up.’ I guess I would say ‘I tried to recreate as close to my memory as I could’. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 3)

Many creative non-fiction book authors admit the failing of their memory in forewords or introductions, making it clear to their audience what they are reading. Roorbach does not believe this is necessary.

I don't worry about any of that because my job is to make a work of art. I am not a journalist when I'm writing memoir. I'm two different things. When I write journalism I'm very serious about every quote. I know the difference, they're two different art forms. I think a lot of journalists and a lot of young writers make the mistake of bringing journalistic ethics to what is essentially a novelist's world. (2004, p. 2)

When asked then what his 'creative non-fiction ethics' were, Roorbach (2004, p. 2) offered a simple, yet tongue in cheek, reply: "I don't have any ethics."

Gutkind offered an explanation for Roorbach's comments when he elaborated on his own views on the truth.

Bill [Roorbach] is a fiction writer and he considers himself to be more of a fiction writer than a non-fiction writer. And so it would be more understandable for him to say that than people who start out as journalists like me. I mean I started out as a non-fiction writer, Rebecca Skloot started out as a journalist and she is very strict on the truth. So this is an interesting orientation then. I don't think there is a wrong and a right here, there's what Bill feels he needs to do and what other people feel they need to do. (Gutkind, 2004, pp. 2,3)

Gutkind's appraisal of Skloot's views were vindicated during her interview. She stated, "There are a lot of people who have said that 'as long it captures the essence of the truth that's all that really matters' but I don't buy that at all" (Skloot, 2004, p. 2). Skloot is such a firm believer in the truth that if she writes dialogue that is remembered by a source, rather than what she recorded herself, she will put those quotes in italics.

The issues of composite characters and compression was raised by Gutkind who admitted to compressing time in his non-fiction work,

The piece that I passed out in the second session [of his creative non-fiction lecture at the Mid-Atlantic Creative Nonfiction Summer Writers' Conference] is an example of compression. The nine things that happened in that story didn't happen in the same day. It happened over a few days, plus when I'm in the car with the vet and she's telling me about the animals, in fact I heard those stories sitting in a conference room after the truck. Some would say that's bad. Many would say that's bad. But it was just easier to put it into the narrative at that point. But I didn't make anything up. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 3)

Compression is justified, according to Gutkind, if the sources agree to the changes. "It's very journalistic. I went back to her [the woman in his vet story], okayed absolutely everything and she did not know, or remember, that she had told me these stories at a conference table a few days later" (Gutkind, 2004, p. 3).

This, said Gutkind, makes his work different to Roorbach's. The reason is that while Gutkind may compress time, Roorbach creates composite characters. Gutkind explained, I wouldn't do it [create composite characters]. I think most people coming into the field [creative non-fiction] with a non-fiction background also wouldn't knowingly do it. But I don't think it's wrong, I just think it's wrong for me. I would like it if Bill, or someone like that, would tell the reader 'I don't remember the four people in that room, but as far as I'm concerned they are all the same person'. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 3)

While Roorbach dismissed the idea of informing the reader when referring to his memoirs, he did agree that in some cases the reader needed to be informed of fabrications.

I would alter 'A' [from the literature-derived definition] slightly to say 'Is based on facts and does not fabricate places, people or events except with the 'permission' of the reader. So you read a book like Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* or *Woman Warrior*. She uses fiction in the service of the

narrative. So her father won't talk about his history in China, so she goes and researches four ways Chinese men could get to America in the early 20th century and then writes the story for each one, and one of them is close to the truth. So she uses fiction in the service of non-fiction, but she makes it very clear that that is what she is doing. She's not lying. (Roorbach, 2004, p. 1)

The idea that without the truth a story loses quality was raised by Rotella. He said, I don't think I've ever read a composite character that was believable. I think in many ways the creativity of non-fiction comes within the confines of non-fiction, without making something up. How well you can tell a story without putting fictionalised elements in it. (Rotella, 2004, p. 1)

Rotella's comments above seem to be the most aligned with the ideas presented in the literature. While scene setting, characters and narrative may all be important, what is at the heart of creative non-fiction is telling readers stories which are as close to the truth as is humanly possible. As Fitzgerald (2002, p. 15) stated, it is only poor writing which relies on deceiving its reader, true creative non-fiction weaves a story using facts, not fiction. It is the same for journalism or for other non-fiction genres such as histories or encyclopaedia entries. Whether you are Stephen Glass concocting facts in *The New York Times* or Helen Darville creating a false past in *The Hand That Signed the Paper* (Demidenko, 1994), you will find lying is not tolerated.

4.4.5.4 What is not creative non-fiction

When reaching a definition it is often easier to decide what something is not, rather than what it is. In fact during his interview, Gutkind pointed out that defining the genre is a very difficult proposition, comparing it to other artistic arenas.

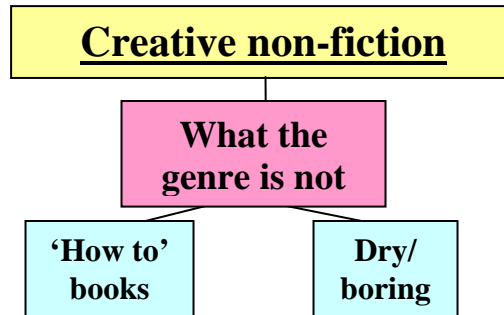


FIGURE 4.5

What creative non-fiction is not

During interviews, the elites often found a useful method to describe their understanding of creative non-fiction was to describe what the genre is not. Rebecca Skloot (2004, p. 1) noted not all non-fiction books fall into the creative non-fiction category because they do not include a story or a narrative, “Like ‘how to’ books, you can write them creatively, but no matter how you do it, I would never consider it creative non-fiction.”

Mark Rotella identified ‘dry’ writing as a quality that disqualifies a particular work from being included under the banner of creative non-fiction,

I think that there needs to be creativity in coming out. I think there’s some good stuff, I think there’s some histories that may convey something dryly. I think a history, any history, can be creative but there are some that are more academic, there are some that are dry. (Rotella, 2004, p. 1)

Roorbach thought along the same lines, saying ‘boring’ writing should also be left outside the genre. In an interview with *Harper’s*, Gutkind stated that most non-fiction is “tedious and boring,” and therefore different from works of creative non-fiction where the use of fiction writing techniques allow for works of drama rather than tedium (Nehring, 2003).

This division between works of creative non-fiction and other non-fiction pursuits on the level of how interesting they are to readers, harks back to the idea of quality and art

raised and discussed earlier in this chapter. For the elites and other commentators on the genre, it is the nature of creative non-fiction and its use of literary techniques – in fact its literariness – which makes it stand apart from other works of non-fiction such as ‘how to’ books, academic criticism and hard news reporting (Forche & Gerard, 2001, p. 1).

4.6 Publishing Styles

The elites were also asked where creative non-fiction could be found – which publishing styles the genre fits into. As with the writing techniques, they were also shown a literature derived definition:

Publishing styles of creative non-fiction: Literary journalism, feature articles, memoir, biography, personal essay and narrative history.

All the elites agreed with the proposed styles; however, they also brought some additions to the definition. These were literary journals, wider narrative styles and broadcast media. Through the interviews, it also became clear that despite a certain division sensed by some writers between creative non-fiction and journalism, creative non-fiction can be found in both general and news magazines and newspapers. What creative non-fiction is not was also discussed with reference to blogs. Deeper discussion of these styles follows.

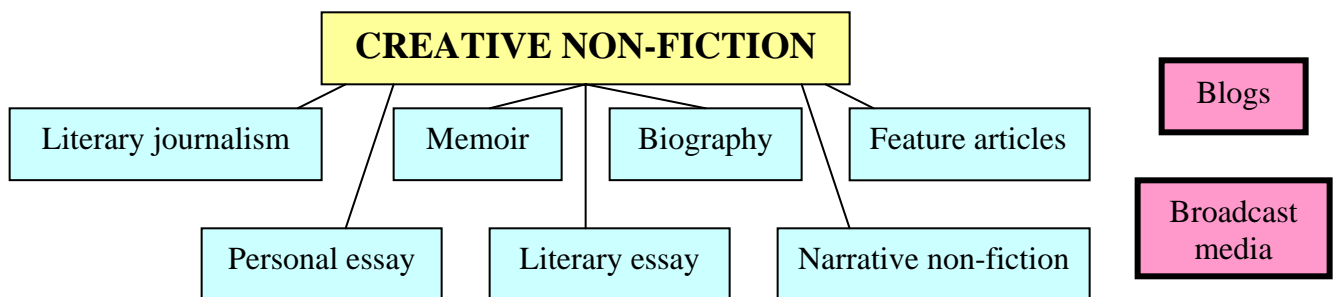


FIGURE 4.6

The publishing styles of creative non-fiction (in blue) and what styles were deemed not to be creative non-fiction (in pink).

4.6.1 Literary journals

Literary journals have been seen as the place where frustrated journalists can go if their newspaper editors are not willing or able to publish any journalism with a literary bent (Marren, 2002). This is one of the reasons behind the success of literary journals and magazines dedicated to creative non-fiction and its styles (such as narrative or literary journalism). Just two dedicated journals are *The Fourth Genre* and *Creative Non-fiction*.

During his interview Gutkind (2004, p. 1) pointed out how the number of literary journals available to creative non-fiction writers is growing, “There are three literary journals dedicated primarily to creative non-fiction and many literary journals are opening their doors to creative non-fiction.”

While these journals may not result in the pay-day enjoyed by creative non-fiction book authors or contributors to the top magazines, journals do offer writers income and, in some cases more importantly, a chance for them to have their creative non-fiction work read and appreciated.

4.6.2 Narrative styles

While the literature had shone some light on the use of narrative in creative non-fiction, it was not until the interviews that the scope of narrative styles became clear. Gutkind explained there is more than just narrative history available to creative non-fiction writers. While the other narrative styles he discussed may not traditionally be sought out by writers, they do offer interesting opportunities in education.

Gutkind stated that narrative medicine is becoming popular, with the leading medical schools and colleges promoting the subject. These schools include Columbia in New York and the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania. Gutkind said the techniques of narrative medicine are the same as creative non-fiction,

But while my emphasis is on the end product — the writing — student physicians are learning narrative medicine with the end product being able to listen to and recreate their patients’ stories so that they can understand, as

clearly as possible, what has happened to their patients in order to make a more accurate diagnosis. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 2)

Gutkind explained that in the USA, physicians had forgotten how to listen. This was why creative non-fiction techniques had been implemented. These techniques give doctors the tools to understand and relate patient histories to the best of their abilities. The success of narrative medicine can be seen in the pages of respected medical journals like *The Journal of the American Medical Association* and *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Their editors report that they are increasingly publishing reflective (creative non-fiction) stories by doctors (Smith, 2003, pp. 55,56).

On an education front, Pennsylvania State University's College of Medicine produces a literary journal called *Wild Onions*, the University of New Mexico publishes one entitled *The Medical Muse* and Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons publishes its narrative medicine in the journal *Reflexions*. Columbia also publishes a semi-annual journal titled *Literature and Medicine* which is edited by literary scholar Maura Spiegel and Dr Rita Charon, a founder of the narrative medicine movement and a professor at the university's medical school (Smith, 2003, pp. 55,56).

Narrative medicine is not the only new form of narrative style to emerge, according to Gutkind,

And then there is this other movement called narrative law, where attorneys are beginning to learn how to write briefs in story-oriented form. A story is more persuasive and what they are trying to do is persuade. There is also another movement in psychology which they call narrative therapies. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 2)

This gift of storytelling – and of understanding stories – is clearly becoming more valued in a range of university faculties. Stories are used as a path to understanding and

empathy – and from the increasing popularity of subjects like narrative medicine – it seems that this method works. One of the functions of journalism, particularly in its role as the fourth estate, is to educate and inform the population. Considering the success of stories in informing doctors and lawyers about their clients, surely journalists using the techniques of creative non-fiction could have similar success informing newspaper readers about the world around them.

4.6.3 Broadcast media

While the literature presented virtually no link between creative non-fiction and broadcast media, two elites stated they believed there was more to the genre than print. Rebecca Skloot (2004, p. 2) stated creative non-fiction could be found on radio, “I’ve absolutely heard great creative non-fiction radio stories. National Public radio, some of their ‘All things considered’ shows’.” Donna Lee Brien (2004, p. 2) included a wider range of media: “My definition of creative non-fiction also uses film makers, you know including some documentary makers, radio.”

While Skloot and Brien stated some broadcast media material is creative non-fiction, the definition created in this study will not support this concept. Through the Literature Review and the interviews with the other elites it has become clear that creative non-fiction is a genre of writing – and as such, media products like radio and television broadcasts cannot be included in the definition. There is also a clear link between the world of literature and creative non-fiction, particularly when the categories of artistic intention, high quality and use of fiction writing techniques raised by the elites and in the literature are considered. This literature link also points to broadcast media not being included in the definition of creative non-fiction.

There are certainly documentaries that use narrative and storytelling techniques such as *March of the Penguins*, a recent smash hit in box offices around the world. Television and radio current affairs also occasionally use narrative techniques (such as *Australian Story* on the ABC). However, as explained above, just because a medium uses some of the techniques of creative non-fiction does not mean that it *is* creative non-fiction. There

could be some argument for the scripts for these broadcast media being included in the definition because they are pieces of writing; however, this link is tenuous because it is not the designed method of publication. Creative non-fiction is a genre of writing and as such, cannot include broadcast media in its definition.

4.6.4 Magazines and newspapers

Gutkind acknowledged that high quality magazines are major publishers of creative non-fiction and to a lesser extent other publications publish the genre. Open any of the top-end magazines in Australia or overseas and you will find examples of creative non-fiction. The pages of *Harpers Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Madison*, *The Bulletin* magazine, *Playboy*, *Australian Traveller* and many others are filled with articles which fall under the banner of creative non-fiction.

However, while magazines have been long associated with creative non-fiction, Gutkind says the genre also has a place in newspapers even though it is not as acknowledged.

Another place is in the matters of the major newspapers in the United States, whether they admit it or not, like the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, all feature a lot of creative non-fiction. Not articles about it, but articles that use the techniques of creative non-fiction. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 2)

Evidence of creative non-fiction in newspapers is not limited to the United States. Every day in Australia you can find examples of creative non-fiction in newspapers. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and the *Financial Review* regularly publish creative non-fiction. Examples are ‘Into Room 101, for love and a great deal of money’ (Bone, 2006) in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Lost in space: the ancient art of map reading’ (Ayres, 2005) in *The Australian*, and ‘Horsing around in the desert with racing fanatics’ (Elliott, 2005) from the *Financial Review*. With just these examples it seems clear that creative non-fiction has a solid place in newspapers and in journalism.

4.6.5 Blogs

While creative non-fiction can be found on the internet, such as in the on-line literary journal *Brevity* (<http://www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity/>), blogs are not part of the creative non-fiction movement according to Gutkind. The term blog is an abbreviation of the term ‘weblog’, and these blogs usually take the form of a personal journal published on the Web.

Gutkind’s exclusion of this style of publication comes back to the ‘quality’ issue he raised when defining creative non-fiction.

It’s about intention [art instead of providing pure information or opinion] and it’s about how much work the bloggers are willing to do. Blogs tend to be people’s first drafts and they also tend to be written by non-writers. So it’s a bit like these people who say ‘I’m going to write a book,’ but they don’t know how hard writing a book is, so they go and blog it out... It’s quite interesting to read some of them, but I’m not sure I would put that under the literature umbrella. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 2)

When compared to the history of published writing, blogs are very new on the literary scene. They represent the personal ideas on everything from Buffy the Vampire Slayer (<http://whedonesque.com>), to Quantum physics (<http://interactions.org/quantumdiaries/>), to global affairs (<http://windsofchange.net/>), to finishing a PhD (<http://www.phinished.org/>). Some blogs are written well, others are appalling esoteric rants.

There is almost no academic discussion on where — or if — blogs fit into the realm of literature, and only Gutkind appears to have put the distance between blogs and creative non-fiction on record. Over the past year there has been new discussion on blogs, particularly from such scholars as Axel Bruns (2006) (for example the book he edited with Joanne Jacobs, *Uses of Blogs*). However, this discussion has pertained to their use as teaching tools, or alternatives to established media, or as new and developing histories and representations of the culture, rather than as literature.

Perhaps, as time passes, blogs and the study of them will develop and their place in literary society will reveal itself. There is need for further research in this area. However, given its nature as a rapidly evolving phenomenon, blogs fall beyond the scope of this study and outside the definition of creative non-fiction.

4.7 Attacks on the term ‘creative non-fiction’

While the purpose of the elite interviews was to reach a definition of creative non-fiction another interesting observation of the genre emerged – this is the negative view of the term ‘creative non-fiction’ in some arenas of the professional and educational communities.

Gutkind was particularly vocal about how the genre’s name is often ignored in favour of other descriptors. He explained there are literary journals open to creative non-fiction as well as many magazine editors interested in publishing examples of the genre. Despite this, Gutkind said many major outlets are dismissive of the term ‘creative non-fiction’,

The *New York Times*, the biggest newspaper in the world, is ignoring creative non-fiction completely. They are also one of the more daring newspapers in the world and they use creative non-fiction techniques on the front page, everywhere, and have been for 20 years, but they hate that phrase so much, that they totally ignore it. (Gutkind, 2004)

Gutkind has written about the *New Yorker* and how the editors refuse to acknowledge the term ‘creative non-fiction’ (Forche & Gerard, 2001, p. 173). Despite this, Gutkind invited the magazine’s editor to his 2004 conference on creative non-fiction. During the four years since he derided the views of the editors, Gutkind says things have changed, though not enough.

[B]ut he [the managing editor of the *New Yorker*] didn’t use the term creative non-fiction [during his presentation at the conference], he kept referring to what his people do, which is report. ‘First we do the reporting,’ he said. Most everybody else would say ‘we write the story’ or ‘we do the narrative’,

but the *New Yorker* talks ‘reporting’. But the *New Yorker* is really creative non-fiction. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 1).

It is not only newspapers and magazines which ignore the genre, according to Gutkind. Journalists and journalism schools are also ignoring creative non-fiction to their peril.

Creative non-fiction would never have made it in the United States if we had relied on the naturally obvious suspects — the journalists — who won’t accept it. There are no journalism programs in the United States who offer a creative non-fiction program. There are journalism programs that teach narrative techniques and literary journalism... including the Harvard program. I mean, Harvard, our most prestigious university with some of the most creative scholars in the world, are sticking with ‘narrative journalism’. Nobody uses that term except for Harvard. The journalism people there are so old fashioned, I just don’t get it. (Gutkind, 2004, p. 1)

Gutkind’s incredulity at the journalism education community’s view comes from his understanding of the opportunities creative non-fiction can afford journalism graduates. As he said, “Publishers are crazy for creative non-fiction” (Gutkind, 2004). What creative non-fiction offers graduates is not just the newspaper and magazine work associated with genres ending in ‘journalism’, creative non-fiction also offers more than the ghost writing and long-form narrative journalism pursuits that are often adopted by schools like Harvard. Under the creative non-fiction banner students can learn all these forms as well as the literary essay, lyric essay and memoir.

With the huge success of books like *Holy Cow* by Sarah MacDonald (2002), *Angela’s Ashes* by Frank McCourt (1996) and *Almost French* by Sarah Turnbull (2002), and the plethora of literary journals devoted to essay writing it seems journalism students could benefit from being instructed in the myriad of publishing avenues available.

4.8 Definition construction

Through the elites' responses and the literature-derived definition, it was possible to construct a working definition for the purpose of this study. The elites identified that creative non-fiction was an art form; that it was of a high quality; had a creative structure that could be narrative in form; employed fiction writing techniques such as theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation and point of view; engaged the reader's emotions; was based on verifiable facts and searched for the emotional truth. Creative non-fiction's publishing styles were also enriched from the interviewing process. The styles agreed to by the elites were literary journalism, feature writing, memoir, biography, personal essay, literary essay and narrative non-fiction.

When examining the elite's responses it became clear that an effective way of explaining their ideas was by using examples. These examples provide a clear point of reference to the reader who may not be familiar with the terms particular to literature or creative non-fiction. This device is also applicable to the readers of a definition of creative non-fiction, so it was decided to use examples of famous authors in the definition.

The creation of a formal definition needs to be based on a logical, concise pattern that includes as much information as possible in the least number of words. A definition should include the word to be defined, the class of the object or concept to which the term belongs and the characteristics that distinguish it from the other terms in its class. For example, "Water (term) is a liquid (class) made up of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen in the ratio of 2 to 1 (distinguishing characteristics)" (Lab, 2002).

With this in mind, the following definition of creative non-fiction was determined:

Creative non-fiction is a genre of artistic writing which uses fiction writing techniques to tell true stories which engage readers. These techniques include the use of theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, character development, and the inclusion of the writer's point of view.

Writers of creative non-fiction strive to produce works of high quality which reach the emotional truth of the story and utilise creative structures.

Publishing styles of creative non-fiction include literary journalism, feature articles, memoir, biography, literary essay and narrative non-fiction. Famous authors of creative non-fiction include Mark Bowden, Tom Wolfe, Bill Bryson, Sarah MacDonald and Hunter S. Thompson.

The construction of the definition above answered the first research question: 'What is creative non-fiction?'. The next step of the study looked to answering, in part, the second research question: 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' This part of the study answered the question through examining the relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism through another round of elite interviews and is discussed in the following chapter, Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative non-fiction

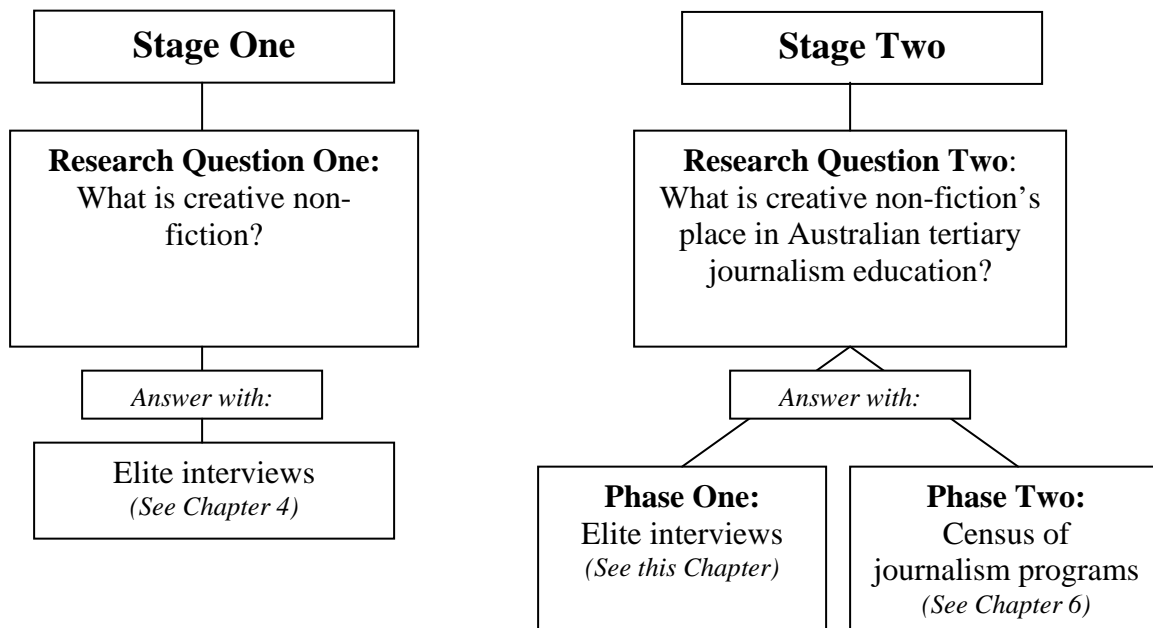
Phase 1 – Elite Interviews

5.1 Introduction

In Stage One of this study a definition of creative non-fiction was formulated through elite interviews. This answered the first research question: ‘What is creative non-fiction?’ The next research question was: ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’ It is addressed here in Stage Two of this study which is divided into two phases – the first is this phase – five elite interviews. The second phase was a census of Australian journalism programs (see Chapter 6).

Through elite interviews, this phase of the study sought to answer the second research question by revealing the relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism. The interviews also provided some opinions on journalism education and how creative non-fiction would impact journalism students and therefore the next generation of journalists

FIGURE 5.1. *The stages of research*



5.2 Methodological Considerations

As explained in the Methodology chapter, this phase of the study used elite interviews. Elite interviewing differs from other interview styles as it focuses on respondents who are selected due to their expertise in the area of research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 94).

The elites chosen for this study were Australians who had a track record in both creative non-fiction and journalism. These specialisations would allow them to explain the range of approaches, skills and techniques applicable to the different genres and how their writing has been shaped by the range of work they have produced. It was also decided that the elites should be Australian. This choice was made because this research, while useful to the broader education community, is primarily driven by an interest in the education of journalism students in Australia. Therefore the views of people living and working in this country were necessary.

Elites were chosen so that a range of styles of creative non-fiction and journalism would be represented. They were also chosen due to their different lengths of time spent in their professions and their different levels of influence on the media. This meant the study had a range of experience levels represented. The elites chosen were Hugh Lunn, Helen Garner, Sarah MacDonald, Nikki Gemmell and Edward Southorn.

In this chapter, two types of diagrammatic representations are used to portray the key concepts revealed in the interviews. Part of the relationship between journalism and creative non-fiction – where the genres share common ground – is shown through Venn diagrams. These diagrams show how families of objects overlap – in this case the elites' views on journalism and creative non-fiction (Gray, 2004, p. 405). Venn diagrams are graphic organisers which are often used in the study of literature to compare the different functions of parts of the texts under analysis (Moore, 2003, p. 17). The diagram is therefore a visual representation of the similarities and differences between the two texts. In the case of this study, the texts are the approaches and techniques of journalism and creative non-fiction. The dynamics at play between these texts are represented in the Venn diagrams.

Another diagrammatic representation of results utilised in this chapter is a conceptual map. A conceptual map is a way to visually analyse a concept or to draw comparisons between two or more concepts. In general, a conceptual map will feature the main concept in the centre of the display, near the top. Attributes, subtopics, characteristics and any other factors that are derived from the concept will be shown originating from, or leading out from, the initial concept (Marchinko, 2004, p. 6).

4.3. Elites' qualifications for inclusion in the study

Hugh Lunn

- Professional work

Hugh Lunn has worked as a journalist for the *Courier-Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Reuters* and *The Australian* newspaper and has won three Walkley Awards. His book, *Vietnam, a Reporter's War* (1985) recounting his experiences as a war correspondent in Vietnam was *The Age* Book of the Year for 1985. He is best known for his series of memoirs, which began with *Over the Top with Jim* (1999) his story of growing up in 1940s and 1950s Brisbane. Lunn writes the column 'My Backyard' for Queensland's *Sunday Mail*.

- Education experience

Lunn began a degree in journalism at the University of Queensland. However, he did not complete it. He was instructed during his cadetship at the *Courier Mail* in the basics of feature writing, but he credits his time during the Vietnam war, watching American greats like Jim Pringle at work, with crafting his writing ability. Lunn has taught at university, giving lectures and tutorials in feature writing. Between 1975 and 1981 he gave five tutorials a week for the University of Queensland. He stated this was an extremely informative process as he was forced to analyse his own work in order to teach. This analysis allowed him to re-evaluate some of his choices and to improve his writing.

Helen Garner

- Professional work

Helen Garner won her first award in 1978 for her novel *Monkey Grip* (1983). Since then she has written other novels, non-fiction books, screenplays and been a freelance feature writer. In 1993 Garner won a Walkley Award for feature journalism for her cover story in *Time* magazine about the Daniel Valerio child murder case.

- Education experience

While Garner has never formally studied writing she has taught at the university level. She has taught a range of writing styles, fiction and non-fiction, mostly in workshop formats.

Sarah MacDonald

- Professional work

Sarah MacDonald has worked as radio journalist for the ABC on various youth orientated radio and television shows and for Radio National. She is the author of the best selling non-fiction book *Holy Cow* (2002) and the editor of *Come Away With Me* (2004), an anthology of travel stories.

- Education experience

MacDonald has not studied writing, other than the lessons taught during her cadetship at the ABC, and perhaps because of this, she does not see herself as a writer. Instead she thinks of herself as 'a person who wrote a book'. Despite these views, MacDonald has led writers' workshops.

Nikki Gemmell

- Professional work

Nikki Gemmell was a journalist for the ABC, working in Darwin, Alice Springs and Sydney. She has also worked for the BBC for three and a half years and has produced a number of freelance feature articles. Gemmell is most famous for her novels: *Shiver*

(1997), *Cleave* (1998), *Lovesong* (2001) and *The Bride Stripped Bare* (2003). Her work has been translated into many languages and is internationally acclaimed.

- Education experience

Gemmell studied Communication at the University of Technology in Sydney where she took many creative writing classes and a small number of radio journalism classes. Gemmell hoped to be a novelist, but knew she had to make a living while writing. This is why she took a cadetship at the ABC when she graduated from university. In 2000, Gemmell left the world of full time journalism for a life of motherhood, novels and the occasional piece of creative non-fiction. Gemmell has never taught writing of any style.

Edward Southorn

- Professional work

Edward Southorn is a journalist for *The Tweed Daily News*. His journalism career began with his cadetship at the *Melbourne Herald* in the late 1970s. He has worked on regional papers in Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria, and was at the *Courier Mail* in Brisbane as a senior reporter, acting chief of staff and industrial relations writer for seven years. He worked in England for 18 months in the late 1990s reporting for the *Portsmouth News* regional daily, and then for *The Engineer Magazine*, a trade publication in London. More recently, Southorn has worked for the *Gold Coast Bulletin* and has been with *The Tweed Daily News* since 1999.

- Education experience

Southorn has a Bachelor of Arts from Deakin University, majoring in history and is enrolled in an MA in Creative Writing (non-fiction) with the University of Queensland. His project, a creative non-fiction book, is tentatively titled 'Surfing mythology', which he expects to finish in 2006. Southorn has taught at university as a guest lecturer.

5.4 Interview Results: Questions posed

The elites were asked questions in two categories. The first looked at their views on the relationship between their journalism and creative non-fiction. The second examined their experience of education and their views on how worthwhile creative non-fiction would be for the next generation of journalists. The questions the elites were asked differed slightly to account for their different backgrounds and interests.

5.5 Journalism – Creative non-fiction relationship

This phase of the study examined the relationship between journalism and creative non-fiction. The elites were asked if their experience with journalism had helped their creative non-fiction writing and if there were differences in the way they approached the different writing genres. They were also asked if they saw differences between their creative non-fiction work and their journalism. The elites revealed differences and similarities in their approaches, techniques and points of view. The following explores the elites' views in these categories: approaches in general, specific considerations for the approach and techniques.

5.5.1 Approaches

5.5.1.1 Approach in general

The general approach the elites took to the different styles of their writing revealed more about how their journalism had helped their creative non-fiction than it did about the differences between the two genres. According to elites Southorn, Gemmell, Lunn and MacDonald (the elites who first published in journalism) journalism provided a foundation for their future writing. They stated journalism also enabled them to be faster, more disciplined writers and much better researchers and observers than they might have been without journalism training.

5.5.1.1.a Similar approach

The elites also found many similarities between journalism and creative non-fiction, despite the clear differences between the genres (for example use of inverted pyramid

versus a narrative structure). Garner and Lunn, in fact, found almost no differences between what is seen as their journalism and their work in longer non-fiction. This is perhaps because their journalism, at least in the past decade, has been in the form of feature writing, a publishing style of creative non-fiction.

Garner (2005, p. 1) stated her approaches to creative non-fiction and her journalism were essentially the same, “You just go in there, poke your nose around, see what you can find and then write it down in the most interesting way you can.” She said there were no style or technique differences between the two genres.

Lunn (2005, p. 2) also found similarities in his work, “What I think when I sit down to write a feature is that I have to tell people something they didn’t know before. And that’s what I think about when I sit down to write a book and that’s the only thing I think about.”

Southorn and Gemmell both spoke about how creative non-fiction and journalism were genres of writing which complemented each other. While in some professional areas it is recommended that you do not mix styles, for example a tennis player is discouraged from playing squash, it seems in writing, crossing the genre divide can be beneficial.

Southorn stated his journalism provided a solid foundation for his creative non-fiction. He began his journalism career in the 1970s at the *Herald* in Melbourne. At the paper there was a strict environment with compulsory shorthand, fact checking and a focus on quality, accuracy and ‘getting it right the first time’. “All those kind of things are like habit to me now when I’m writing something,” stated Southorn (2005, p. 1). He said his writing today, compared to some of his fellow creative non-fiction writers, is better presented in the first draft stage because of this grounding,

I think journalism makes you write tighter, it makes you aware of repetition and stops you from using sloppy expression, where, for example, you might have two or three consecutive paragraphs and there might be two or three

words that jump out at you because they've repeated themselves when they shouldn't have. Things an [book] editor would probably draw attention to, but as a journo what you write is going to a sub-editor and they're going to pick it up so you start to second guess them; it tightens your work I think. (Southorn, 2005, p. 1)

Gemmell also credited her journalism background with much of the success of her fiction and creative non-fiction,

It taught me to observe and observe objectively and to constantly take notes, and be rigorous about jotting down conversation scraps, or observations, or what things look like... write clearly, don't befuddle the listener, don't use big words that perhaps you don't understand, that may distract from the main narrative. (Gemmell, 2005, p. 1)

However, Gemmell did say she found it difficult to write creative non-fiction and fiction at the same time.

Gemmell's cadet days at the ABC were also instrumental in her learning two of the key features of creative non-fiction – using vivid descriptions and writing in scenes,

[I learned to] tell a story, tell it simply, tell it in pictures. Because you have to paint a picture for people listening on the radio and they may be listening in a very noisy truck or whatever, so it's got to be very clear and direct and punchy and to the point. (Gemmell, 2005, p. 1)

5.5.1.1b Different Approach

While Southorn had previously spoken about how journalism provided a solid foundation for his creative non-fiction, he also explained that his approaches to his creative non-fiction and his work at the *Tweed Daily News* differed in some ways. He said this was due to the attitude of newspapers over the last 10 years,

...[newspapers] have been so focused on the bottom line that they're getting young journalists in there and working them as hard as possible and paying them as little as possible. Guys my age are considered to be a pain because

you can't push us around as much. We want a little bit more money and we're more interested in quality than quantity. As a result of that you have a very low proportion of well researched, well thought out, well presented, longer, creatively presented pieces going into those small local papers. (Southorn, 2005, p. 1)

Southorn believes small local papers are not being read because they are not offering the audience a reasonable quality of writing or information. This is not only a problem for the readers, according to Southorn. He also found writing for these publications unstimulating, unlike his creative non-fiction. "My creative non-fiction helps to keep my head together and my brain working, because if I was not doing this project [his creative non-fiction book] I would probably drop out of journalism" (Southorn, 2005, p. 1).

Sarah MacDonald also saw some differences in the way she approached her journalism and creative non-fiction. Her first transition into more creative work was when she moved from hard radio news into radio current affairs and magazine formats. MacDonald saw these radio styles as creative non-fiction because they tell stories on the air, stories that are woven into interviews. However, as discussed in the previous chapter (Section 7.3), broadcast media are not included in this study's definition of creative non-fiction.

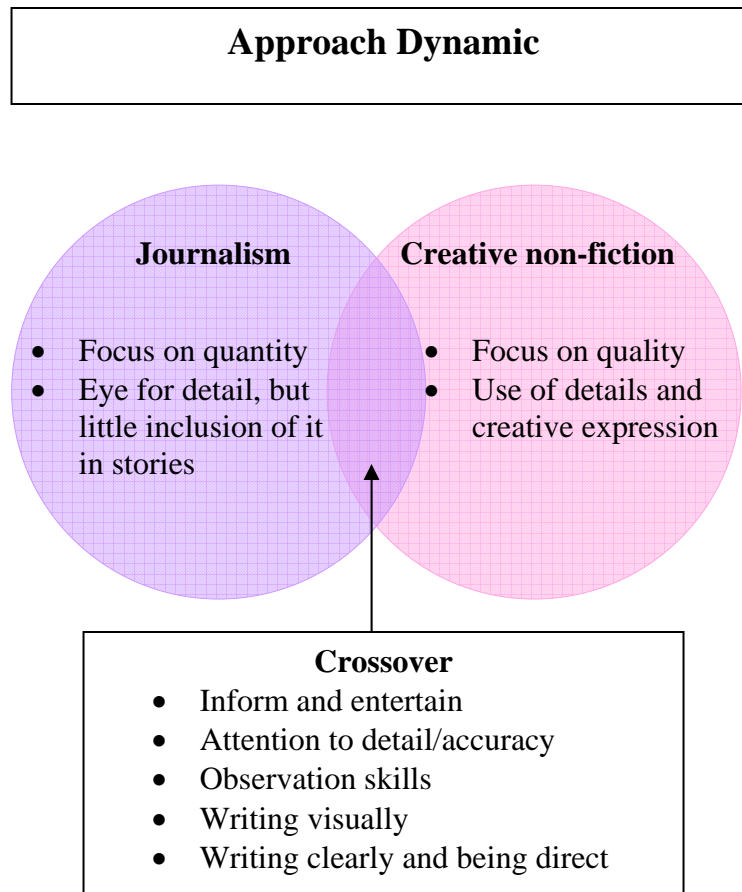
When it came to writing her book, MacDonald said her time writing hard news had given her an eye for detail, but she noticed that, strangely enough, it is detail that is often lost in hard news stories. Creative non-fiction allowed her to be more expressive and capture the true nature of a place, person or event,

...you lose a lot of detail in the stories you tell in journalism. There's just not enough room and you're kind of putting everything into very short sentences and that sort of thing. You're just doing the nuts and bolts of the story and you're losing all the wonderful intricate detail that is often the most fascinating and interesting thing. (MacDonald, 2005, p. 1)

In both cases Southorn and MacDonald lamented the restrictions of journalism and enjoyed the expressive nature of creative non-fiction. While there are clear reasons for hard news to be written the way it is (such as space and time for the writer and reader), it is equally clear that journalists can stagnate if they are only permitted to write hard news. So often the elites in the Stage One of the study referred to hard news as being boring or dry, and this group of elites agreed. Creative non-fiction can be a sorely needed outlet for journalists to practise much of their craft in a lucrative and less restrictive environment.

Through the elites' views on the approaches taken with both genres it is evident how one aids the other – journalism provides a grounding for creative non-fiction writers to build upon and creative non-fiction aids journalists both in sticking with their profession and in the quality of their work. While journalism has a focus on quantity and an eye for detail and creative non-fiction is more concerned with quality and creatively expressing those details, the genres share common ground in that they both can inform and entertain, need to be accurate and require observation skills and clear visual writing. From the responses here it seems that the genres, rather than being adversarial, complement each other and enrich the writing process and the experience of readers.

FIGURE 5.2



5.5.1.2 Specific considerations for the approach

While the elites discussed their approaches to writing in general, there were also some specific factors which they felt impacted their work. These were: the audience, the editor and the truth.

5.5.1.2a Audience

It has been said that understanding your audience is one of the three keys to successful journalism (the others being ethics and clarity of communication) (Klein, 2005). However, not only journalists must be aware of their audience. All writers must understand that the readers of children's fiction are different to the readers of academic

articles, who are different to readers of love letters, who are different to readers of washing machine manuals. Anyone who expects to publish work should sculpt stories with the audience in mind.

The issue of whether or not the audience changes depending on the style of writing produced was raised by Southorn and Garner. While these writers saw their work differently, they thought about their audiences in the same way – when someone is picking up their writing in any form it must be interesting.

This notion of writing being ‘interesting’ appears to be common among writers of creative non-fiction. The elites in the Stage One study constantly referred to the importance of engaging the readers and the elites in this phase of Stage Two are no different. In the end though, shouldn’t all writing be interesting, no matter whether it is journalistic or creative non-fiction? Perhaps this is a perception shift for the journalism community to consider.

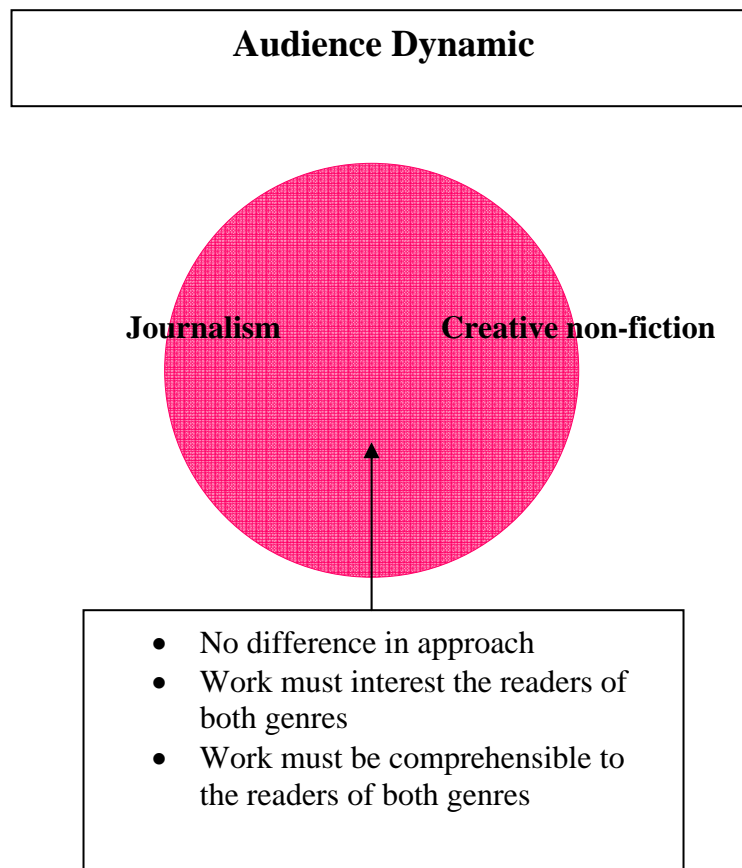
Garner’s (2005, p. 1) view that her work in newspapers and books was virtually the same came across clearly, “...I’m just trying to make the story as clear as I can and as vivid as I can and as enjoyable to read as I can. So I’d like to think that just about anybody who was reasonably literate could read what I wrote...” She stated she is only aware of her approach or her theories about writing to the point that she is trying to make her writing “sparkle” (Garner, 2005, p. 1).

Southorn said although his book is about a specific topic – surfing – he is pitching the story to an audience beyond the surfing community. This focus has meant that his writing approach is very similar to the one he uses when working for the *Daily News*:

So I’m trying to write journalistically in that sense, so it is decipherable by many different people and there are some heavy themes there like post modernism which most people will find mind numbing and a lot of people have a strong anti feeling about it. I think that is a shame so I’m trying to write it with those particular readers in mind. (Southorn, 2005, p. 3)

Here, it is clear that creative non-fiction and journalism are complementary. What these elites learned as journalists about writing for an audience, and the range of considerations and responsibilities this implies, has aided them in their creative non-fiction. For these writers, this crossover has reached a point, at least in terms of audience, where they are almost unaware of any differences between the genres.

FIGURE 5.3



5.5.1.2b Editor

While the final readers of a story may be who the writer has in mind when putting pen to paper, there is someone else to please – the editor. No one will read your story if the editor refuses to publish it and you may not want anyone to read your story if the editor changes it to the point where you are unable to recognise your work. It has been said that newsrooms can be like dysfunctional families – with the writers in the child role and the editor as the parent (Scanlan, 2003b). Whether the editor is a tyrannical or benevolent parent is usually dictated by personality, but, according to the elites, there are also other factors at work.

The influence of an editor is an issue with which Lunn, Gemmell and Garner were particularly familiar. While Lunn said book editors were less of a hindrance than their newspaper counterparts in the creative process, Gemmell said the editor was vital in all styles of writing, and Garner no longer lets anyone stand in her way.

Lunn pointed out how the editor is the first point of call in the news writing process, When you're writing journalism, you have to always think of your audience when you write. So, when I'm writing for a newspaper, you are writing a story that the editor will publish, although... I wrote a lot of stories they wouldn't publish. But I did that deliberately, because I wanted to stretch the boundaries. (Lunn, 2005, p. 2)

Lunn explained if you are writing for a newspaper you should be aware of the style the editor wants. If you don't produce work in that way you have to accept that it will not be published. However, this is not necessarily the case when it comes to the world of book publishing, as Lunn (2005, p. 2) explained: "[W]hen I'm writing books I feel I have much greater latitude, although not complete latitude by any means. So I can be more outlandish or more creative in the way I present it, or more me."

Gemmell acknowledged the importance of the editing process and stated she perhaps leaned too heavily on her editors during her novel because of her journalism experience,

[T]hat probably stems from my ABC days when I was used to handing in my copy and having it ripped apart by subs in the newsroom. But it was usually in a constructive way, in that I could see what they were on about and I appreciated that they were perhaps making my product better. (Gemmell, 2005, p. 2)

Gemmell said radio journalism also taught her not to be precious about her work – that everyone has a different personality and even if you think your work is perfect, something will be changed. This experience helped Gemmell in her fiction to re-write and hone her work constantly. It also prepared her for some of her creative non-fiction experiences.

The Bulletin piece was actually very heavily edited. I said from the start that I didn't want anything about *Bride* [*The Bride Stripped Bare* (2003)] in there, but the editor came back to me and said that the readers would be interested in that, that they wanted me to include it. And I wondered if I really had to do it, but I did... it was very interventionist, but that is a rare thing for me now. I appreciate it though, I enjoy it... she [*The Bulletin* editor] was on my wavelength and we worked well together. (Gemmell, 2005, p. 3)

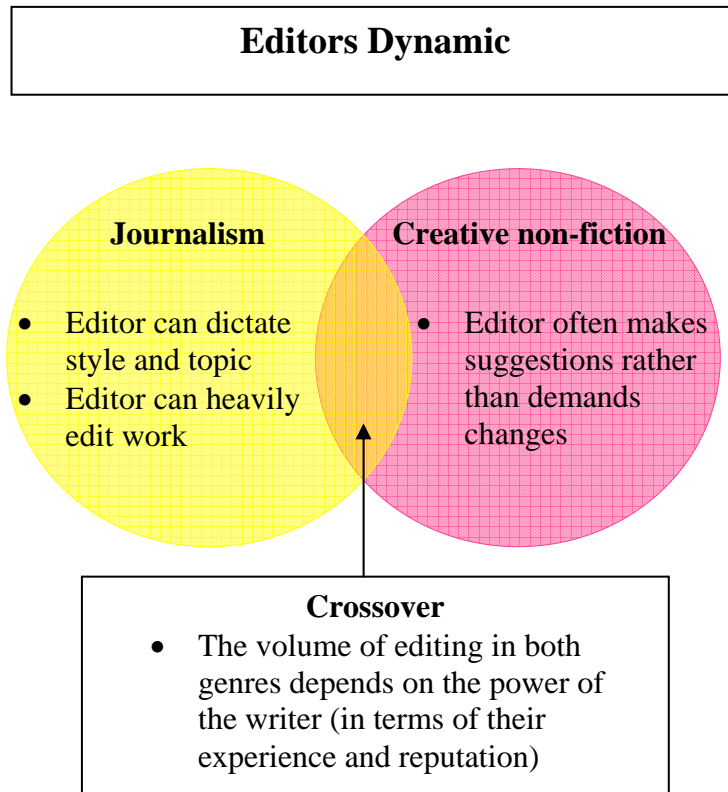
While Garner (2005, p. 2) has never written hard news, she did experience a great deal of heavy editing at the beginning of her feature writing career, what she called having her “stuff slashed in the most grotesque way.” Following her years of success, things have changed a great deal for Garner and now she does not feel there is any difference between the responses from her book editors and her newspaper editors,

When I was younger, people on newspapers would edit my stuff with a free hand, but I'm old and cranky now and they don't dare to. So I make it clear when I'm going to write an article for somebody that I don't expect that to be edited, or if they are going to edit it, then they're going to edit it in consultation with me (Garner, 2005, p. 1)

Great editors are always appreciated, no matter what their genre, just as bad bosses are loathed across the board. With the right person in charge your work can go from good to great and you can be led into better stories and new adventures (Smolkin, 2005, p. 8).

It seems, at least with editors, personality and skill may be everything. While in journalism the editor can dictate style and topic and heavily edit work, and in creative non-fiction editors are known for making suggestions rather than demanding changes, your writing credits are what will usually dictate the volume of editing. This is also true of the elites; there may be differences in the ways they approached their various styles of writing, but the difference in the elites' experiences with editors has more to do with their power over their work (through their experience and reputation) than the genre of the writing.

FIGURE 5.4



5.5.1.2c Truth

In discussions about the perceived differences between journalism and creative non-fiction the treatment of the truth is usually the most contentious issue (see Section 7 in the Literature Review). During the elite interviews for Stage One, Bill Roorbach was the least interested in presenting the absolute factual truth to the readers. This way of thinking was attributed to his interest in fiction writing. However, this new stage of research revealed that even if your primary output is fiction, you do not necessarily believe the truth is a movable feast.

Gemmell (2005, p. 3), famous for her works of fiction, was adamant that her non-fiction work must be 100 percent reliable, factual and as close to the truth as possible: “I feel like creative non-fiction is just like my radio days: it’s non-fiction so it has to be the truth.” Gemmell’s commitment to the truth means she carries a notebook where ever she goes,

I am constantly writing things down, that’s one thing radio journalism taught me – to be a good observer and to be constantly recording observations and conversation scraps. I did that as a cadet journalist when I was 22 and I still do it now as a fiction writer, just as much as I always have. And that always ends up in my creative non-fiction and my fiction and everything. (Gemmell, 2005, p. 3)

Gemmell (2005, p. 3) stated that it is important to record the truth “rigorously”; to use what she called “old-fashioned” techniques – like recording conversations. Gemmell (2005, p. 3) was adamant that the creativity comes when pen is put to paper, not before, “You have to have a solid basis of the truth as in ‘this is exactly what happened and this is exactly what he said’. Otherwise you can get into enormous trouble.”

While Gemmell and MacDonald share a past in radio journalism, they do not share in continuing all the methods of their past. With her creative non-fiction book, *Holy Cow* (2002), MacDonald did not record all her conversations so she had to rely on memory

when she began to write. However, the truth is still important to MacDonald, so she provided readers with disclaimers,

In fact the first line of the book after the prologue is a disclaimer, it is ‘I have a terrible memory’. So I kind of provide myself with an out, right from the very beginning... It wasn’t that I had deliberately distorted the truth, or anything, but that memory is fluid and it has enormous gaps and everything you are about to read is via my memory. Although, I did keep diaries and I wrote a lot as I was going, so I wasn’t at the mercy of memory the way I would be if I tried to write about any other part of my life. (MacDonald, 2005, p. 2)

MacDonald used composite characters and changed the names of some of the people in *Holy Cow* (2002). This is a controversial practice, but MacDonald (2005, p. 3) justified her decision by informing the readers about these fabrications and by stating that it was done to protect the people in her story. “I talked to people who were going to be in it [*Holy Cow*] and I said, ‘Do you want me to use your real name, do you want me to use another name?’.”

MacDonald said she felt she could offer this option to people because she was writing a book – if she had been writing a feature article it would have been a different situation:

I think in books you can do that, whereas in feature writing, I know sometimes they change people’s names if it’s a story about sex or something intimate, but usually they’ll put the person’s name and their age and that kind of factual basis up front. So I did change names because I thought that was only fair, whereas in feature writing I couldn’t have done that. (MacDonald, 2005, p. 3)

According to MacDonald this difference between writing features and books is based on the idea of character creation. Creating a character in creative non-fiction involves providing readers with more than just names; instead the personalities, mannerisms and voices of people will be rendered on the page. In MacDonald’s opinion, this literary

device is more appropriate for books, although she stated that all descriptions of people in non-fiction are filtered through the eyes of the writer – so the truth of that depiction is never absolute, “...because no one ever sees themselves the way others see them” (2005, p. 3).

While MacDonald saw a difference between creative non-fiction in article and book form, she also saw differences between styles of books. She made reference to Garner’s latest book *Joe Cinque’s Consolation* (2004) which follows a criminal trial interlaced with Garner’s feelings on the case. MacDonald (2005, p. 3) felt this book could be seen as more truthful than her own because it is based on court transcripts, but she does ask, “[W]ho knows what the actual truth was of what happened?” MacDonald (2005, p. 3) said she was trying to express the truth in her book – but that not everything should be taken literally because it is not all “literally 1000 percent true.”

One of MacDonald’s statements was particularly representative of her views, and of others such as Lee Gutkind and Bill Roorbach.

So, I think that if anyone thinks they’re writing the whole truth, even in feature writing or any other kind of journalism, is kidding themselves. We always get facts wrong, but what you have to have is the intent to make things as true as possible. (MacDonald, 2005, p. 4)

It was significant that MacDonald mentioned Garner as their ideas regarding the differences between styles of creative non-fiction and their relationship with the truth were similar. Garner stated:

I think anyone who is writing a memoir, they’re talking about their own life. Only a fool would think everything they remembered was exactly right. I think in that kind of writing that you have a contract with the reader and the contract is that you don’t invent things. (Garner, 2005, p. 1)

However, the similarity between the two authors ends when you compare their ideas on the differences between books and articles. While MacDonald feels there is a

difference between the amount of literary licence you can take in an article versus a book, Garner stated she treated the truth the same way in all her writing. Yet, this was not always the case. Garner stated the truth became an issue in her non-fiction book *The First Stone* (1995). When writing the book, Garner feared that a litigious person at the centre of the story would take legal action against her if she recognised herself. Garner chose to split the woman into a number of characters to protect against a law suit. Garner (2005, p. 1) admits this was a serious flaw in the book and said she would never make the same mistake again, “That is the only aspect of the book that is fictionalised, but I feel I was kind of driven to it, but I’m really sorry that I did it.”

Garner’s views on the truth were moulded after a great deal of backlash against *The First Stone* (1995). Other writers share Garner’s ideas on truth, despite not having shared in such a public baptism of fire. Southorn’s view on the issue is almost identical to Garner’s – he stated he is true to the facts no matter what non-fiction style he is writing in.

However, when Southorn discussed the intangibility of the truth, what was remarkable about his statements was that he said if he were to play with the truth, he would be more likely to do so in his journalism than in his creative non-fiction.

I think you can be a lot more mischievous in the newspaper ... I can write a story about the development debate and take one side and put it out there, and the key players on both sides of the debate will realise what I’m doing but not all the readers will; they will just take it as is. You can play down the merits or the problems of it and get away with it in the paper a lot easier [than in academic work or non-fiction books]. (Southorn, 2005, p. 2)

While Southorn may know how to play with the truth, he is committed to presenting the readers of his creative non-fiction with the most reliable information possible. This means occasionally admitting when there is no definitive ‘truth’. In his history of surfing there are a number of disputed facts – such as who invented a particular surfboard first –

and in these instances he stated, “I just say it is a grey area, I’m totally up front” (Southorn, 2005, p. 2).

Lunn is the most experienced journalist of all the elites, yet his views on the truth may be the most fluid. During his interview, his views on the subject even began with a comparison between non-fiction and fiction:

I’ve always been unable to see the difference. One of the things I think is a little strange to me is the way within the book industry... they say non-fiction people are just reporting what happened, but fiction writers are making it all up. But you know ... I think fiction is usually totally true although the names change, and non-fiction can never be true because otherwise you would be in more trouble than Ned Kelly. Non-fiction writers have to be more adept using their imagination than fiction writers have to be. (Lunn, 2005, p. 1)

While Lunn (2005, p. 1) said he did not make things up, he also said it is not possible to write the “exact truth.” This thinking echoes the ideas of MacDonald, although Lunn sometimes changes names to protect himself from retribution, rather than from a place of altruism. Lunn said the truth sometimes had to be left behind because you do not want to defame friends, and when you reduce great lengths of time in a book, the truth may be compromised. Lunn also feared legal reprisals from people mentioned in his books such as editors of *The Australian* newspaper and Rupert Murdoch.

However, the greatest reason for not writing the exact truth, according to Lunn, is making the book attractive enough to read:

Because why would you bother if it isn’t written in an interesting way that takes you through the chapter to the end of the chapter so you want to read the next chapter? So from that point of view it’s not true and it’s not the minutes of the meeting or a comprehensive record. (Lunn, 2005, p. 1)

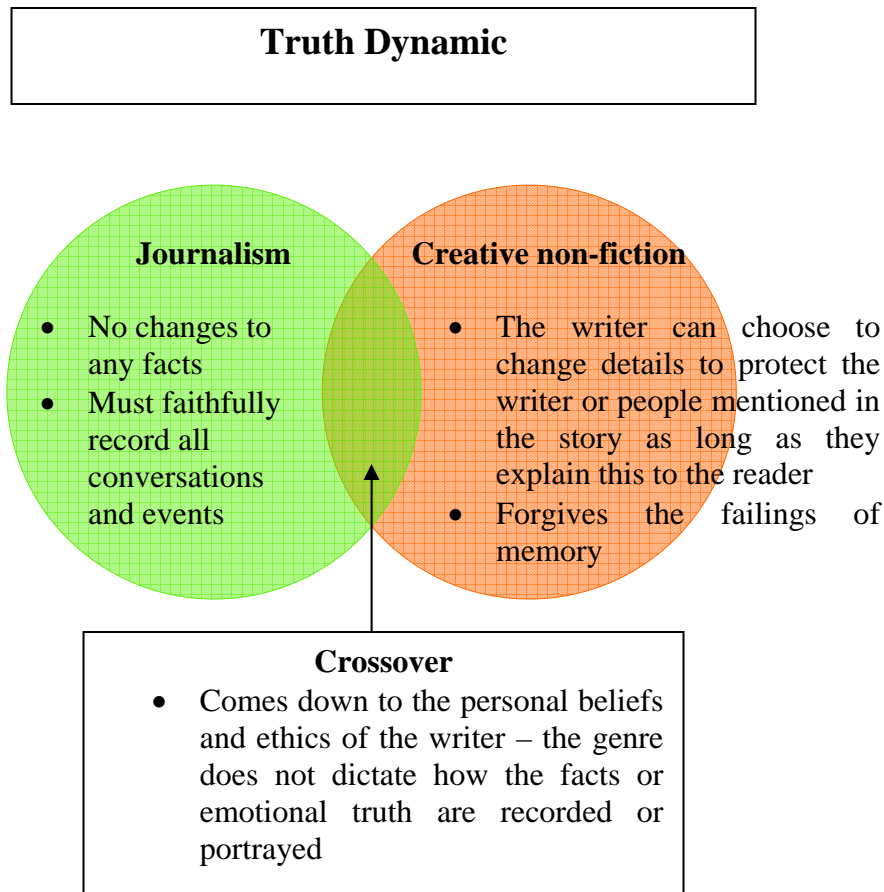
Lunn said this is because it is only a piece of writing in which certain events are selected and descriptions are written to be entertaining.

Lunn gave the example of his weekly column in the *Sunday Mail* called 'My Backyard' where he tries to make his life amusing for his readers. "So if I write the way I've just written one that is going in a few weeks time, that I was just walking across my property the other day and I found some old golf balls the size of hailstones and I saw a cricket ball there the size of a hail stone and an orange..." (Lunn, 2005, p. 1). Lunn (2005, p. 1) said he did see a golf ball and it did hail, but that he is "...just turning it around, having a little go at the media because hail stones are always the size of golf balls or cricket balls or tea-cups or oranges."

Lunn sees this style of writing as playing with the truth – and he said because it is his life, how he writes about it is up to him. Lunn (2005, p. 1) stated it is this decision to "turn things around" and make them interesting that sets his work apart from the writing of many others, "that is why a lot of people who write memoir don't get it published or it's boring."

The truth has often been a contentious issue for writers of all genres – whether they be journalists, creative non-fiction writers or even the writers of fiction. Great writers of any genre provide truths for their readers, whether these truths are revealed through describing actual events or ones created in the writer's imagination (Orr, 2000, p. 6). It is the literal or the factual truth, however, that journalists are meant to strive for and this occasionally brings them into conflict with non-fiction writers who see the emotional truth or the 'larger' truth as more important than the noting down of every single fact. From this phase of the study, it has been shown that opinions about the nature and use of the truth come down to a writer's personal ideas and ethics rather than the genre they are writing in.

FIGURE 5.5



5.5.2 Techniques

In Stage One, when the definition of creative non-fiction was refined, it was beneficial to separate the elites' views on their approaches and their techniques. In this stage of the study this was an equally advantageous method, because the way a story is written most clearly demonstrates into which genre it fits. The techniques closely associated with journalism are the inverted pyramid, use of sources, the third person 'news voice' and paraphrased or short quotes (see Chapter 4, Section 5.2.2). Whereas creative non-fiction is known for its creative structure, writer's point of view, character development and inclusion of dialogue (see Chapter 4, Section 5.2.2). There are also other considerations

when comparing the two genres, such as research style and the effect of time on the choice of technique.

5.5.2.1 Structure: inverted pyramid versus a creative structure

During the Stage One definition process, one of the clear differences between creative non-fiction and hard news writing that emerged was the way in which the stories were structured. In creative non-fiction the writer pays attention to the theme of the story and structures the piece to evoke emotion and resonance. In hard news, the writer must be aware of limited space and the attention span of the reader, so journalists will often employ the inverted pyramid structure.

However, it must be said that hard news is not restricted to the inverted pyramid (despite this structure's prominence). Other structures utilised include radical clarity which takes information and orders it in a way designed to maximize a reader's understanding. This order involves providing background information and context early in the story (Beasley, 1998). There are also many examples of the creative non-fiction techniques of narrative and point of view being employed in hard news and in these instances it is possible to see the way the genres can interact (an issue further discussed in Chapter 7, Section 2).

Elites Southorn, Gemmell and Lunn saw this issue of structure in slightly different ways. While Southorn saw a clear divide between his news writing and his creative non-fiction, Gemmell looked at creative non-fiction's relationship with fiction, and Lunn focused on the similarities between newspaper and magazine feature writing and memoir and biography.

Southorn (2005, pp. 1,2) found structural differences to be one of the clearest ways he could differentiate journalism and creative non-fiction: "When I'm at the *Daily News* it's closest to the inverted pyramid, who, what, how, why, where and when, get all that stuff in." Southorn explained that his newspaper uses a computer program which only allows him to write to a prescribed word length. This is not an issue for him in his creative non-

fiction work, where he has 120,000 words to play with. According to Southorn, this allows him to be more creative with his work.

Gemmell compared her experience with writing, and learning to write fiction, with the world of creative non-fiction. Through this discussion she revealed the importance of narrative structures in both genres.

Things like narrative drive, telling a story, these are things I learned from Glenda Adams who was my writing tutor at UTS [University of Technology, Sydney]. She said the scariest thing is getting someone to turn the page, to keep on reading, and that's also true for creative non-fiction... These things are just as important for creative non-fiction as they are for fiction and I think there is a place in journalism courses to teach all those things for non-fiction writers. They might say, 'I'm not interested in narrative and all that,' but it's the basis for a good story and that could be a good non-fiction story or a good fiction story. (Gemmell, 2005, pp. 3,4)

Lunn was more specific about the style of creative non-fiction when he discussed structure. He explained that no matter whether a writer is producing a newspaper feature or sitting down to write a book, the structure should be creative.

I always barf when someone mentions the pyramid with features... I think the feature writing in Australia is abysmal because everyone is trying to write these inverted pyramids... What I think when I sit down to write a feature is that I have to tell people something they didn't know before. And that's what I think about when I sit down to write a book and that's the only thing I think about. (Lunn, 2005, p. 2)

Lunn stated that writers of features and books need to write as interestingly as possible, otherwise no one will continue to read their stories to their conclusion.

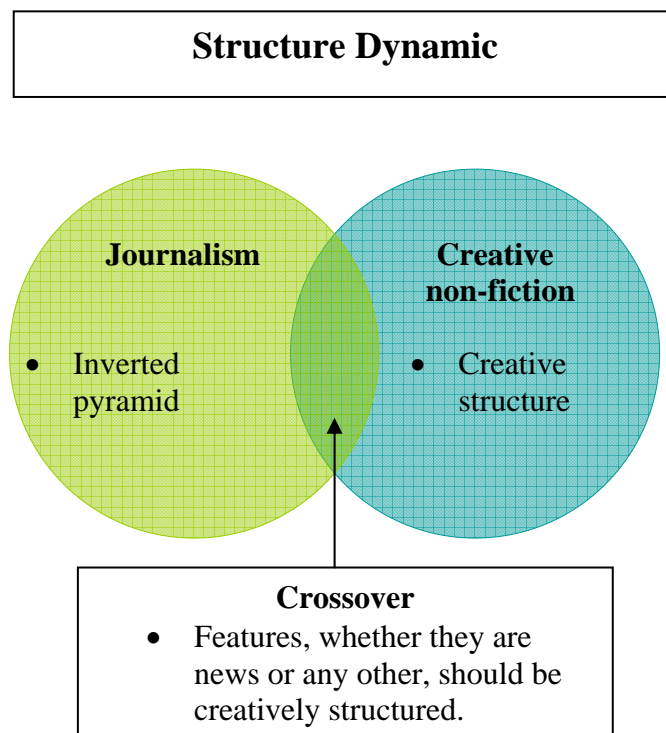
For Lunn, to produce interesting stories, the writer must not necessarily write in chronological or other simple order of events,

[T]he people who can't write and can't write memoirs say stuff like 'I went to primary school and then I went to play cricket and then I went to secondary school and then I passed my exams and then I went to university' and that's how they write. But what I'm trying to do is avoid that and recapture a time and capture some interesting characters. (Lunn, 2005, p. 3)

For example, Lunn's book *Over the Top with Jim* (1999) is structured around his relationship with school friend James Egoroff rather than other, perhaps closer, relationships. This is because this friendship reflected the themes and images wound into the story.

Journalism is known for the inverted pyramid and creative non-fiction focuses on creative structures. Where they meet is in the cross-over style of feature writing (a style claimed by both genres) which should be creatively structured.

FIGURE 5.6

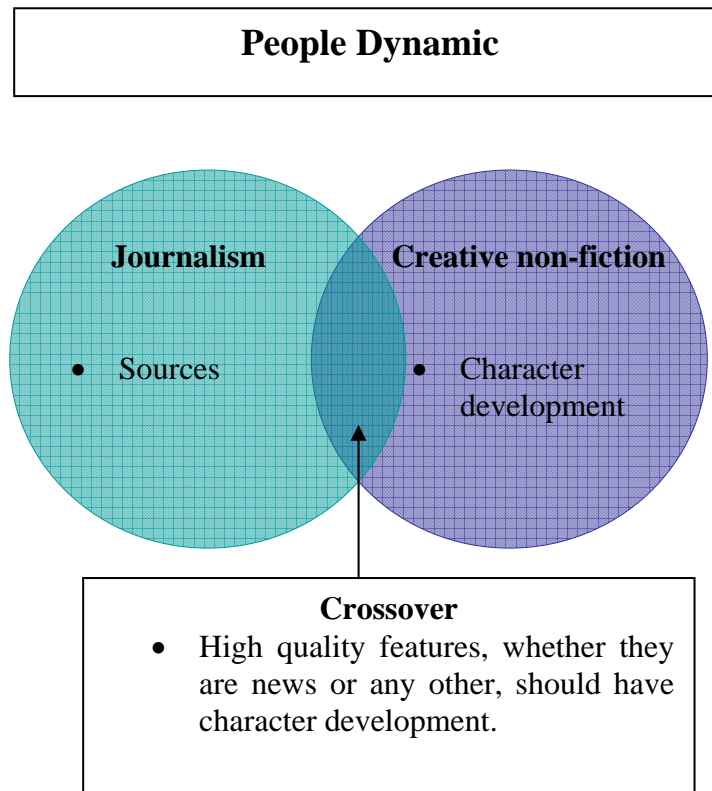


5.5.2.2 People: use of sources versus character development

The divisions between hard news and creative non-fiction were identified again by Southorn when he broached the nature of character in the two genres of writing. He stated while he only brushes over the people he mentions in his stories for the *Daily News*, he is hoping to populate his book with characters as the writing process develops, “Further down the track once my first draft is complete I will look a lot more at character development and the polishing the actual writing itself” (Southorn, 2005, p. 2). MacDonald also saw character creation as a feature of her creative non-fiction work and not something she had considered before undertaking her book. Gemmell (2005, p. 4) said this device was one of the key elements of a piece of creative non-fiction, “I think it’s important to learn ... about how to hook a reader, how to create vivid characters, how to satisfactorily end a piece, etc..”

There are few well-rounded characters in hard news, even basic informative features usually miss out on discussing who a person is and instead focus on what they know or what they have done. This is an issue of space and intention. Space, in that there is often not enough room in a newspaper to develop character. And with intention, as Gutkind said in his interview for Stage One, the journalist’s primary focus is on providing his or her reader with the facts, but the creative non-fiction writer’s interest is in creating real worlds for the reader to visit, to ensure the reader becomes enveloped in who people are and the environment they find themselves in. In this area journalism and creative non-fiction are often on different sides of the fence.

FIGURE 5.7



5.5.2.3 Speech: use of dialogue instead of paraphrased quotes

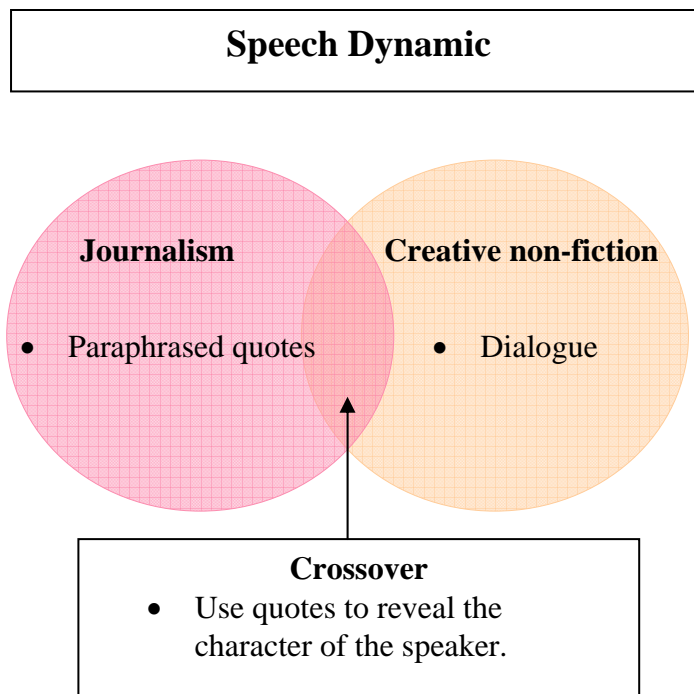
Part of developing characters is using their voices to reveal their personalities. While only Lunn spoke at length about this issue, it is one that has been raised many times in the literature (see Chapter 2, Section 5).

Dialogue is important to Lunn (2005, p. 3) whether he is writing a feature or a full length non-fiction book, “But a lot of people when they write features, they have all the people they interview sound the same, so they’re sort of short-handing them and writing their own version of what they said.” Lunn used former Premier of Queensland Joe Bjelke-Peterson as an example of how using what people say, rather than summarising their speech, can reveal a great deal about their character. “You could say he said that

‘The government is in a lot of trouble,’ or he could say, ‘They have one leg on each side of a barb wire fence’, which is what he would’ve said” (Lunn, 2005, p. 3).

It is difficult to utilise dialogue in a hard news story of only a few paragraphs. While many techniques of creative non-fiction, such as point of view or description, can be employed in any amount of space, there is rarely room for the transcription of a full discussion. For example MacDonald (2005, p. 2) said “...there was also far more dialogue [in *Holy Cow* than in her journalism].” However, as Lunn pointed out, there is almost always enough space for a small, but lively, character-revealing quote. This is probably where journalism and creative non-fiction meet – while there are issues with the treatment of dialogue, the way the quotes are able to be used can support both philosophies – get the reader the information quickly, on the journalism side and – entertain and reveal character, on the creative non-fiction side.

FIGURE 5.8



5.5.2.4 Point of view: the writer's point of view versus the third person 'news voice'

One of the most discussed themes during the interviews was the elites' passion for injecting their personal point of views, styles and voices throughout their creative non-fiction. This is known as 'the writer's point of view' and differs from the traditional hard 'news voice' which is in the third person and aims to be objective. For some of the elites, the use of their own point of view was a departure from their journalism and in others it was an extension of their work in fiction, feature writing and other non-fiction work.

MacDonald enjoyed the ability to move away from the impersonal third person style of radio news when she began to write her book *Holy Cow* (2002),

I found that while it was helpful, journalism also constrained me, because when I tried to write about these things [her experiences in India] in that way, it wasn't interesting. It was like: 'Buddhism is a religion that was founded...' And so through my journey it became a much more interesting book. So that's how it changed, and I had to let go of that way of seeing the world and write personally to make it a more interesting journey. (MacDonald, 2005, p. 2)

As with Lunn, MacDonald was focused on producing 'interesting' writing, though for her this was mostly tied up in a personal approach to a story. This focus was in fact honed by her work in feature writing – a fact which reinforces the place of features in the creative non-fiction genre. While in Australia, MacDonald had been solely a radio journalist and it wasn't until she began to write feature stories in India that she began to draw on creative non-fiction techniques,

I think I wrote about three articles. The feature article for *Vogue*, was an 'Up Front' and it's what kind of gave me the idea for the style of the book actually – it was a personal story. They said 'we want you to do a personal story of a transformation in your life' and ...it guided me into the style that I eventually went with. (MacDonald, 2005, p.2)

MacDonald (2005, p. 2) saw this personal style of writing as totally different from her previous work as a journalist, “I kind of thought that I should use the opportunity of India to do something different with my life and I didn’t want to do journalism because that’s what I’d already done.” In fact, MacDonald (2005, p. 1) stated she could never have written *Holy Cow* “through journalism” as it did not allow her to truly reflect on India, her new adopted home, “I wouldn’t have been able to represent the intricacies of the place and also the fact that how you interpret a place is so personal that you need to put that personally.”

While MacDonald and Lunn share a passion for the interesting they see their feature writing and their memoirs a little differently. Lunn (2005, p. 2) stated he felt he had greater latitude to be himself in his books than he did in his features or columns, “And so I think a book ...[should] express your personality and your philosophies to the reader, even if they don’t know it.” Lunn provided the example of *Over the top with Jim* (1999), in which he tells the story in different voices depending on his age at a particular point in the narrative. As he grows older in the book, Lunn uses bigger words and writes in a more mature style, to the point that near the end he is writing about poetry and Shakespeare. Lunn was not sure readers were conscious of these changes as they read the book, but said it did add to their experience.

Gemmell has had a fascinating journey from radio journalist, to fiction writer, to feature writer. As she has come to feature writing after her success with her novels, her approach is now highly influenced by her work in fiction where she has always striven to have a strong individual voice,

I’ve always loved poetic writers like... Salman Rushdie or Cormack McCarthy. With their books, even if you didn’t know it was them you could just flip open to any page, read a paragraph and know who had written it. As a fiction writer I had always wanted to do that and it’s kind of fun with creative non-fiction within the restrictions of a *Bulletin* piece or one for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, or *Mail on Sunday* piece, or whatever, to still stamp your character on your work. I love the challenge of that and I fight for that.

I like the idea of my creative non-fiction having a similarity to it as I write throughout the years... I do like if I can have a distinctive voice there.
(Gemmell, 2005, pp. 2,3)

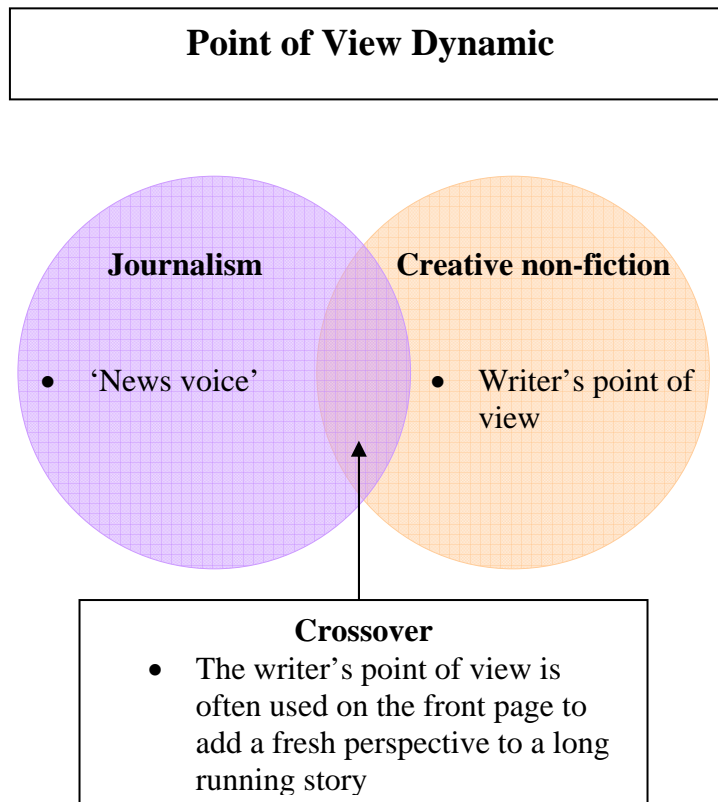
Southorn had previously lamented the inverted pyramid style of his newspaper, and when it came to style he also yearned for the opportunity to cover stories through his own eyes, rather than filtered through the third person.

You can think in terms of Hunter S. Thompson. I've always wanted to go his way... So if there was say, a big bomb explosion in the mall, I would focus on getting as much information on paper or tape recorder as I possibly could and depending on how much time I had to do the piece... I would personalise it as much as I could. (Southorn, 2005, p. 3)

Style is undoubtedly one of the most obvious differences between creative non-fiction and journalism today. Three hundred years ago all news stories may have been written in a narrative style, but today's front pages are still peppered with inverted pyramid and five Ws and H stories (Mindich, 1993, p. 1).

There are examples of the writer's point of view on newspapers' front pages and they are often used to add a fresh perspective to a long running story, such as the coverage of the 2005 Ashes tour, the current Iraq conflict and hurricane Katrina in the USA in 2005. Despite this, it is clear from the elites that the day to day writing life of a reporter is quite different to that of a creative non-fiction writer. The journalist is focused on presenting the reader with what they need to know as quickly as possible, whereas the creative non-fiction writer is making sure the work is as interesting as possible as they explain true events.

FIGURE 5.9



5.2.5 Research

One of the defining features of literary journalism is the volume of research needed by the writer (Ricketson, 2004). But what about the work by these writers of other sorts of creative non-fiction and journalism? Southorn, Garner and MacDonald all found their work in journalism provided them with the necessary research tools to tackle their books.

Southorn (2005 p.3) found that no matter what the style or genre, writers need to be vigilant. "I think both of them [journalism and creative non-fiction] require you to not be lazy and to get out there and do the bloody work and find all the info." He said he used the tools he learnt in his creative non-fiction in his journalism and vice-versa, "I think they're very complementary. You have to make sure what you put down there is right

and if you make any claims you have to be able to back them up with a solid point of view” (Southorn, 2005, p. 2).

Garner also stated she used the same research techniques in her journalism and her books. She simply explored the topic, found out everything she could, then wrote about it in the most interesting way possible.

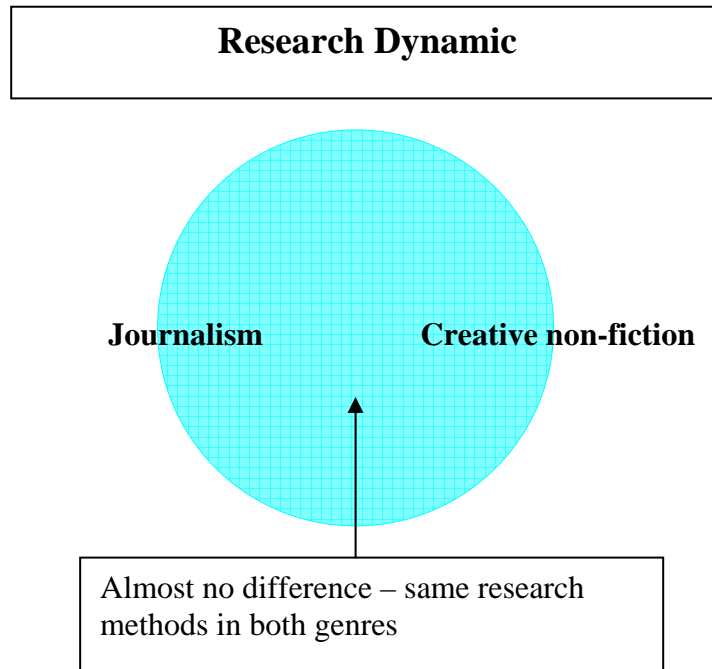
MacDonald found her time as a journalist and as a university student informed her research practices while conducting research for *Holy Cow* (2002). Once she knew she wanted to turn her Indian journey into a book she began researching religions as she travelled the country. For example while she was undertaking Buddhist courses in Dharamsala she was reading around five books on Buddhism,

... and they’re kind of journalism skills, that kind of research that you do and kind of pulling it all together to accessible terms is a skill that I think I learned from journalism. (MacDonald, 2005, p. 2)

While MacDonald found her past in journalism extremely helpful when it came to the research, she found it constrained her when it came to writing about what she had learned. Like many of the other elites, such as Garner, MacDonald searched for an “interesting” way to present information. “When I tried to write about these things in that way [like a journalist], it wasn’t interesting. It was like: ‘Buddhism is a religion that was founded...’” (MacDonald, 2005, p. 2). It wasn’t until MacDonald described events and information through her own eyes that she felt her work was worth reading.

With the research skills needed for hard news, feature writing and other forms of creative non-fiction being so similar it seems at least this level of the relationship between the two genres is clear. Journalism, on a research front, sits well with creative non-fiction, to the point that what students need to be taught in order to tackle either genre is the same.

FIGURE 5.10



5.5.2.6 Time

One of the defining features of journalism is the effect of deadlines on the style and quality of the writing. The need for urgency as a deadline looms is said to be what separates journalism from other forms of non-fiction writing (Kroeger, 2002). The elites experienced what MacDonald and Gemmell called the “luxury of time” when they wrote their long-form creative non-fiction, a different experience for them from their days as frenzied journalists. This difference may be in part because none of the elites stated they were involved in investigative journalism, which requires longer deadlines due to the nature of these stories. Investigative journalists must sift through information, dig for sources and wait for interviews (Tanner, 2002, pp. xix,xx). Often this work can take months or years to complete.

The two elites who noticed the greatest differences between deadline pressures were, unsurprisingly, the former radio journalists MacDonald and Gemmell. As Gemmell (2005, p. 2) said, “You learn in radio to work very quickly, because often you have hourly deadlines, so it’s fast, fast, fast.” It has been years since Gemmell’s radio days, and in that time she has become used to the techniques and the timeline of the fiction writer. This means she now brings these new sensibilities to her creative non-fiction work.

One of my problems when I was writing the column was that it was 550 words I had to file, but it took me a whole week to write them... because I would be using the techniques of a fiction writer and I would constantly be shaving and honing and rewriting and whittling away. (Gemmell, 2005, p. 2)

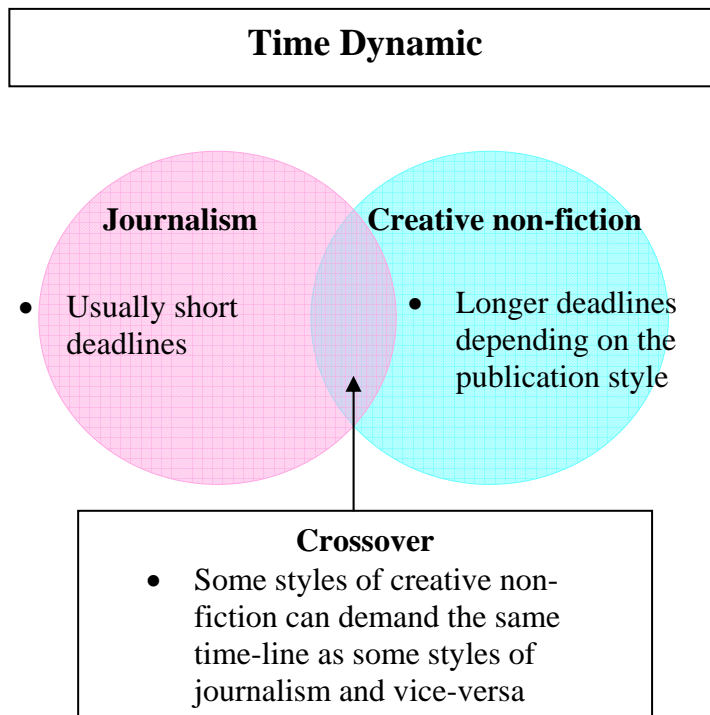
Gemmell (2005, p. 2) had the same experience with her article for *The Bulletin* magazine which took her around three months to write, “[L]ooking back I think it was a luxurious way to work, but a ridiculous way to work because I spent so much time on three pages in a magazine.” Gemmell said she was now unable to spend short amounts of time on her writing. The days of submitting her work after only one or two drafts had passed. This is why she preferred writing books where the results of her months of work were more “solid”.

MacDonald also enjoyed the benefits of time when she left the world of journalism for books. In fact, she said if she had chosen to write feature articles instead of a book, she would not have had time to develop a new unique voice and instead may have remained tied to what she called a “journalism form”. However, MacDonald said she may have completed her book faster than other creative non-fiction writers because of the disciplines journalism had taught her. While this was positive in many ways, there was a downside, “but in some ways perhaps I was trying to write too fast. At one stage my publisher said to me, ‘Just stop writing, stop for a month or two and you need to re-jig your mind about how you’re thinking about this’” (MacDonald, 2005, p. 2).

Southorn and Garner have also enjoyed being able to spend more time on their books than on their news stories and features. In fact, Garner (2005, p. 2) said the only real difference between writing features and books is the deadline, “...with feature writing you’ve got hardly any time. You’ve got to file it quickly, but with a book you can take as long as you like.”

While this issue of time allowed the elites to enjoy the process of writing more than they had in journalism and in some cases produce a better quality of work, this discussion reveals more about some of the differences between forms of creative non-fiction than between journalism and creative non-fiction. It is evident that MacDonald, Gemmell and Garner see the impact of feature writing deadlines as clearly as those of more pressing time limits – such as those of the radio news room. So perhaps what is noteworthy here is that while journalism may be known for its pressures of time, creative non-fiction can be pressured or liberating depending on the publishing style the writer is working towards.

FIGURE 5.11



5.6 The perfect journalism program: Can journalism benefit from creative non-fiction?

The elites were asked their opinions of creative non-fiction in the classroom and what they would include if they had the chance to create a journalism program. Some of their answers revealed a great deal about the way the elites view journalism, others revealed information about the elites' lives and much of what was said reflected current theories of tertiary journalism education. The elites' responses also revealed their belief in the benefits of creative non-fiction for journalism students.

During her interview, Garner's message about education was clear – journalism students and professional journalists should base their writing on a wide range of reading. Garner said she learned to write through living life and through reading and she wondered how students today can think they can be writers if they aren't readers:

I think the more you read, the more you know about writing. That's why there are huge gaps in today's writing, in today's journalism, because I think that people actually don't read. They don't pick up the way it's done, they can't pick one style from another because they've hardly read a book in their life. (Garner, 2005, p. 3)

Garner suggested journalism students be taught through examples of great writing. She suggested providing students with sections of work by a writer who has a unique and talented voice and then asking them to write their own story while mimicking the chosen writer's style. According to Garner (2005, p. 4), this provides students with new ways to think about writing and forces them out of "their own dreary kind of hack style." Students are required to examine the way the writing was created: the sentence length, the use of dialogue, whether the writer used summaries or elaboration and rich description:

It makes you look at their grammar, see how many adjectives they use, or adverbs... It would help, by the way, if students knew something about grammar, which is of course no longer taught in schools. Which is a tragedy of epic proportions in my opinion. (Garner, 2005, p. 4)

Garner hoped this reading program would produce writers with new and interesting skills, but, she said, the quality of the work really comes down to the quality of the writer. “That they know how to handle language, freshly and with vigour and those are things that you can only, to a certain point, be taught” (Garner, 2005, p. 3). She explained there are writers who know a great deal, but their work remains “...dull, dull, dull. And that would apply to most Australian journalists, I think” (Garner, 2005, p. 3). Garner made a particular example of Australian political journalists who she described as “boring” and alienating Australians from their political culture. Perhaps with the right amount of training even the political journalists of the future will be able to write a story worth reading till the last par.

Like Garner, Gemmell said reading was the key to journalism students’ success. She said courses should provide, “Practical, inspiring stuff, great books that enthuse the students” (Gemmell, 2005, p. 4). Gemmell also stated courses should teach practical skills which leave students with a knowledge of the industry and a confidence in their ability to succeed in the workplace. Part of this practicum was an understanding of the techniques of creative non-fiction, “I think there is an even bigger market for creative non-fiction than fiction now, it certainly seems to be the buzz in the publishing world” (Gemmell, 2005, p. 4).

Southorn had very specific ideas about what he saw as the perfect tertiary journalism education. One of these ideas reflected Garner’s suggestion for examples of great writing,

Perhaps include examples of some classic creative non-fiction texts over the past 100 years for analysis in the context of each’s era. How they compare with each other, what they have in common, what they can suggest for contemporary similar writing. (Southorn, 2005, p. 4)

Southorn said students could also be encouraged to look at key events in the local area, or national or international issues, depending on their preferences, and write about the topic from a variety of perspectives. These perspectives could include “expanded

interviews with and analysis of key players..., first-person impressionistic analysis, historical comparison of similar situations in the past, or a combination of perspectives” (Southorn, 2005, p. 5).

According to Southorn, students would greatly benefit from courses in creative non-fiction as it would broaden their talents and therefore the scope of their input on a newspaper. This is because he believed newspapers were reliant on a reasonable standard of writing,

You can’t just cut costs and put out the simplest thing you can because the readers will catch on fast. And you need to have features in your paper and they need to be put together locally as well as all the easy stuff you can pull down from AAP and all the wire services. (Southorn, 2005, p. 4)

This is why Southorn believed young journalists would benefit from learning creative non-fiction techniques – not only can they be useful when writing hard news, but employers can also task these journalists with more complicated work. Southorn said this would make graduates with creative non-fiction skills more interesting to employers, because they could produce a high quality of writing for the same cost as other, less sophisticated recruits.

According to Southorn, it is not only editors who would benefit from students with a range of skills. Readers would also have their growing interests and expectations met:

Creative non-fiction allows a broader understanding of key events, trends, sub-cultures, institutions and people, beyond knowledge derived from basic news and feature writing. Such understanding can in turn benefit the writing and consumption of basic news and features. The assumption is that, in relation to newspapers at least, readers demand and deserve a variety of in-depth analysis. (Southorn, 2005, p. 5)

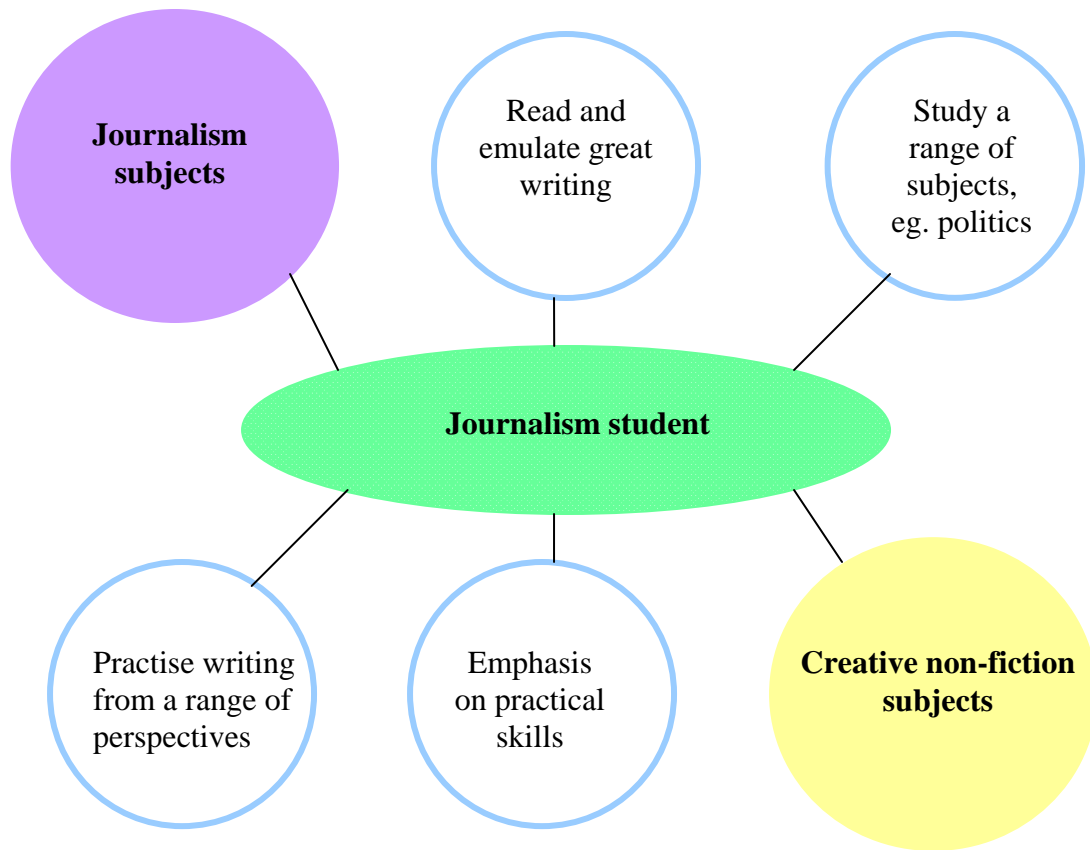
Perhaps Southorn’s interest in the genre is best explained by the fact he has chosen to complete a masters degree in the area and stated that if he were undertaking a journalism degree and was offered creative non-fiction “...then that would be fantastic” (2005, p. 3).

MacDonald said she had little to add to the discussion of journalism education, as she had never been a journalism student. However, while she said she sometimes wished she had studied journalism rather than psychology, there are other subjects that are perhaps more important for a budding reporter, “I think you need to do politics and governance and things like that, possibly English” (MacDonald, 2005, p. 4). MacDonald also hoped journalism courses were focused on the practical nature of the profession as she said theory is so dependent on the style of journalism you choose as a career.

Despite Lunn’s extensive experience in journalism, as a practitioner and as a university tutor and lecturer, he was unwilling to proffer his opinion on the perfect journalism program,

Why would I create one? I mean nobody would want me because I don’t have a university degree. I passed six subjects before I went overseas and never finished it. Although I did represent UQ in intervarsity tennis and I was on their graduate committee for the annual appeal, raising money. But I still lack one of those bits of paper, thank God. It’s like a mobile phone and a degree, it’s kind of up market not to have either. (Lunn, 2005, p. 5)

FIGURE 5.12 *Elites' views on what a journalism student should learn in a journalism program*



5.7 Discussion

The elites chosen for this element of the study were clearly supportive of journalism students studying creative non-fiction. This is not that surprising considering they practice the two genres and have benefited from them both, professionally and on a more personal level through their growth as writers and their pleasure in the genres. The elites' other ideas about education, the importance of practical skills, professional readiness and a broad understanding of their environment (through classes in politics, economics and history, for example), are supported by academics and newspaper professionals (Cunningham, 2002, p. 24). The idea that good writing follows a great deal of reading is also supported in the literature (Stephens, 2000, p. 64).

What is new here is the depth of passion the elites have for creative non-fiction and how it has enriched their lives. They spoke of the way journalism helped them become better writers and researchers than they otherwise might have been if they had come to creative non-fiction another way. Yet, they also explained how their training as journalists had held them back in some ways from reaching their full writing potential. Not once did any of the elites say their experience with creative non-fiction had impacted negatively on their journalism. The only real problem mentioned was by Garner who made errors of judgement with her book *The First Stone* (1995), but these miscalculations were certainly not a result of her experiences with either journalism or creative non-fiction. She was simply a victim of a litigious individual and her own fears.

What emerged from the interviews was the notion that the elites believed creative non-fiction is of a higher quality than a great deal of journalism. This echoes the statements by the elites in Stage One, who put forward the idea that quality is a hallmark of creative non-fiction. This idea of quality was expressed by the elites in this element of Stage Two through their constant use of the word ‘interesting’ when referring to their creative non-fiction and other terms such as ‘fascinating’, ‘sparkle’ and not ‘boring’ or not ‘dull’. They also expressed how they found creative non-fiction allowed them to present more of themselves and be freer with their language, structure and techniques than they could in their journalism.

These positive outcomes of creative non-fiction for the elites, and their support for genre being taught to journalism students, paint an interesting picture for the future of journalism schools which offer a creative non-fiction option. It appears from this study that no harm can befall students from learning creative non-fiction. While this is not enough reason to include the genre in a course, it does counter arguments from some academics and professionals who have stated that creative non-fiction is dangerous to journalism (Gutkind, 2004).

From this phase of the study it is also clear that creative non-fiction is beneficial in one particularly important way – it is stimulating for the writer. Not all journalism

students find chasing down a story and knocking out the words just in time to meet a tight deadline the most exhilarating way to spend their lives. This researcher has often had her students (particularly those who have been studying journalism for more than one year) complain they find traditional news writing dull and wish for something that would challenge them creatively. Creative non-fiction provided a creative output for the elites and could do so for journalism students. While these students may not be paid for works of creative non-fiction while they study or even during the first few years as professional journalists, they will at least know there can be more to their careers than fitting a week at the local council into eight pars.

Whether or not these students should be studying creative non-fiction as part of their journalism degree or as an elective from, for example, the creative writing department is another issue. Fortuitously it is an issue that this phase of Stage Two addressed through the examination of the relationship between journalism and creative non-fiction. The elites' discussion of the approaches and techniques of two genres introduced some interesting similarities and differences.

The differences were as expected – there were a range of issues including structure, character development and use of point of view. Yet similarities emerged among the differences. For example, in the area of structure where there is often a clear divide between the genres, the elites made it clear that a creative structure should be used in feature articles, whether they be in the genre of 'news feature' or on a more creative topic or publishing format (such as a literary magazine like *The Monthly*). Dialogue was also a devisive issue on which common ground between the genres was found. Lunn explained that interviewees' speech patterns and word choices should come through in writing – whether it be a hard news piece or a long work of creative non-fiction. It is also clear through reading newspapers that the typically creative non-fiction technique of the writer's point of view can be useful in news and news features pieces; just a few examples from newspapers are 'A Turkish connection' (Sheridan, 2005), 'Determined with a no-nonsense style' (Wilson, 2005), 'Fingers and shoes amid the carnage — terror

hits home — heartbreak and survival’ (Martin, 2002) and ‘The demo that looked like Gucci coup’ (Ruehl, 1993).

The researcher also expected time and the different styles of editing to be dividing features of journalism and creative non-fiction. However, the elites revealed these are issues more to do with publishing style and the personality and professional power of the individual writer, rather than the genre they are writing in.

The information the elites provided points to journalism and creative non-fiction being complementary genres, their different approaches and techniques in most cases supporting and enriching the writing and reading experience. So what is creative non-fiction’s relationship with journalism? From this phase of the study it seems it is closely related indeed. Both genres are based on the truth and employ similar research techniques. The writers of both genres must be mindful of their audiences and editors. Where the relationship is not so close is in the areas of intent, style and some specific techniques. Most of these differences stem from the fact that journalists must often strive to inform their readers in as little space as possible, while the creative non-fiction writer strives to make his or her work as interesting as possible. Techniques can differ too, but not to the point that there are not places where the genres cross over in each technique area. It seems, from these interviews with elites and the literature, there is much journalism students can learn from creative non-fiction, a genre of writing which overlaps and enriches journalism (see Table 5.1, below).

TABLE 5.1 *The crossover between journalism and creative non-fiction*

Elite's views:	Journalism Specific	CROSSOVER	Creative non-fiction specific
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on quantity. • Eye for detail, but little inclusion of it in stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and entertain. • Attention to detail/accuracy. • Observation skills. • Writing visually. • Writing clearly and being direct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on quality. • Use of details and creative expression.
Audience	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No difference in approach • Work must interest the readers of both genres. • Work must be comprehensible to the readers of both genres. 	N/A
Editors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editor can dictate style and topic. • Editor can heavily edit work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The volume of editing in both genres depends on the power of the writer (in terms of their experience and reputation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editor often makes suggestions rather than demands changes.
Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes to any facts. • Must faithfully record all facts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes down to the personal beliefs and ethics of the writer – the genre does not dictate how the facts or emotional truth are recorded or portrayed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer can choose to change details to protect the writer or people mentioned in the story as long as this is admitted to the readers. • Forgives the failings of memory.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inverted pyramid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features, whether they are news or any other style, should be creatively structured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative structure.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality features, whether they are news or any other style, should have character development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character development.
Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrased quotes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use quotes to reveal the character of the speaker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue.
Point of view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'News voice'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's point of view is often used on the front page to add a fresh perspective to a long running story. For example coverage of the 2005 Ashes tour, the current Iraq conflict and hurricane Katrina in the USA in 2005. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer's point of view.
Research	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost no difference – same research methods in both genres. 	N/A
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually short deadlines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The crossover comes when the style of creative non-fiction (such as a feature article or literary essay) demands the same time-line as a piece of journalism. Or the journalism – such as a piece of investigative journalism – takes as long as a piece of creative non-fiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer deadlines depending on publication style.

CHAPTER 6

Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative non-fiction

Phase 2 – Census of journalism programs

Part One – Results

6.1 Introduction

The final phase of this research involved a census of Australian tertiary journalism programs. The census questionnaire asked the heads of journalism departments (or their nominated representatives) to assess various aspects of the teaching of traditional journalism and creative non-fiction in their departments. It also asked for their opinions of creative non-fiction and its techniques and publishing styles.

This census would further illuminate the answer to the research question ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education’ through revealing what creative non-fiction techniques and publishing styles were being taught in Australian universities and to assess the opinions of senior journalism academics. The purpose of this research question was to find the place of creative non-fiction and by doing so, show whether or not creative non-fiction could improve journalism education.

The journalism departments surveyed were chosen using a document provided by the Journalism Education Association which lists all university departments with practical journalism training (as opposed to general media degrees which may only touch on some of the theory of journalism). In all, 20 universities were surveyed via email, with a 100 percent response rate. While there were 20 universities surveyed, there were 22 respondents. The extra two respondents were necessary because the differences between the Griffith and Brisbane campuses and the undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the University of South Australia meant that they had to be surveyed individually. Two

respondents chose to return the survey via surface mail, rather than email. The reasons for this are not known.

The survey gave academics the option of being anonymous. Most chose not to take this option, but some did not want their name, and/or the name of their institution, to be identified. Reasons given in emails for this choice included not wanting their views to seem representative of the views of the entire department or the university. Those who asked to be anonymous are referred to by their respondent number, which was selected for each institution randomly.

The survey utilised both quantitative and qualitative questions. The quantitative questions were included so that this research would have hard data to refer to when answering the research question: 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' The qualitative questions supplied richer responses which often provided explanations for the respondents' quantitative responses. On a small number of surveys, some quantitative questions were not answered. In this case respondents were contacted by email and asked to complete missing data; these results were then added into the quantitative analysis (conducted using the SPSS software program).

As the population in this survey was relatively small it was possible to conduct a census. This meant there was no risk of sampling error as it was possible to collect information from every member of the population – that is every practical tertiary journalism program in Australia (de Vaus, 1986, p. 52; Floyd & Fowler, 1988).

The results of the questions are dealt with in this, the first part of the chapter. The second part of this chapter is in-depth reporting of the qualitative elements of this survey and their engagement with the literature and the elite interviews conducted as part of this study. The results are depicted using tables and pictorial representations.

6.2 Where are we now – survey results

The following is an examination of the responses to questions four to 23. These responses revealed not only what journalism students were being taught, but the opinions of senior academics on creative non-fiction and journalism education. The responses to questions one, two and three are not discussed as they ask for respondents' permission to publish their identity and that of their institution. The responses to Question 24 were not included as the question asked for curriculum materials.

Question 4.

At your institution which of the following styles of 'traditional' journalism writing are taught for at least one hour per year as part of the journalism curriculum? Hard news writing/ Writing for television news/ Writing for radio news/ Writing for new media (internet etc)/ Feature writing/ Literary/New journalism/ Other.

The first question (following questions about anonymity) in the survey asked respondents to select which 'traditional journalism styles' were taught at their university. These styles were listed as 'traditional', as they would have been taught in journalism courses long before the term 'creative non-fiction' was coined. The styles and the responses are shown in table 6.2.1 below:

TABLE 6.1

Q.4 Frequencies		Responses	
		Yes	Percent
Traditional Styles taught	Hard news writing	21	95.5
	TV news writing	22	100.0
	Radio writing	21	95.5
	New media writing	22	100.0
	Feature writing	21	95.5
	Literary journalism	14	63.6
	Other	8	36.4

While it does not impact directly on this study, the most surprising result from this question was that the respondent from the University of Queensland stated that the curriculum did not include teaching in hard news writing. However, after a search of the university's website, it became clear that there was instruction in hard news writing at

UQ. Why the respondent did not select this option is not clear. Perhaps he simply forgot to tick the box.

It was also interesting to note that literary journalism is so widely taught. This perhaps shows universities' openness to at least one of the styles of creative non-fiction. The only two subjects in the list offered by all universities were television news writing and new media writing.

Question 5

At your institution which of the following 'traditional' journalism writing techniques are taught for at least one hour per year as part of the journalism curriculum? The inverted pyramid structure/ Paraphrasing for attribution/ Use of quotations/ Write the way you speak/ News voice/ Other .

The survey then progressed to asking about what 'traditional journalism techniques' were taught at the respondents' universities. This question was included to provide a base line for the creative non-fiction techniques listed in the following question.

TABLE 6.2

Q.5 Frequencies		Responses	
		Yes	Percent
Traditional journalism writing techniques	Inverted pyramid	22	100.0
	Paraphrasing for attribution	21	95.5
	Quotes	22	100.0
	Write the way you speak	17	77.3
	News voice	21	95.5
	Other	7	31.8

Most journalism departments reported teaching all the techniques listed, with 'write the way you speak' being the least selected technique. This response is difficult to reconcile considering that 21 university departments teach radio writing, yet only 17 teach students to 'write the way you speak' – a hallmark of radio reporting (Masterson & Patching, 1997, p. 91).

Question 6

At your institution which of the following creative non-fiction writing techniques are taught for at least one hour per year as part of the journalism curriculum? Narrative structure/ Characterisation/ Literary language/ Writing dialogue/ Action oriented scenes/ Evocative description/ Use of writer's point of view/ Theme/ Other.

This question drove to the heart of the research question: 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' It did this by asking the respondents to select which creative non-fiction techniques were taught at their universities. As can be seen in Table 6.3 below, every technique identified by the researcher was taught in at least 13 of the 22 university departments.

TABLE 6.3

Q.6 Frequencies		Responses	
		Yes	
Creative non-fiction writing techniques	Narrative structure	15	68.2
	Characterisation	15	68.2
	Literary language	14	63.6
	Dialogue	13	59.1
	Action oriented scenes	13	59.1
	Evocative description	18	81.8
	Use of writer's point of view	18	81.8
	Theme	16	72.7
	Other	5	22.7

Of the five respondents who ticked 'Other', four mentioned techniques that fall under the researcher's definition of creative non-fiction. These were "anecdote" (which falls into the area of scene), "argument" (which is point of view), "Anything which students come up with and works. We start with story-telling, not some journalistic formula," (this idea of 'storytelling' falls under the narrative banner), and "context" which is certainly part of creative non-fiction as writers cannot find the emotional truth of a story, nor can they hope to write evocative scenes, without understanding a situation. Writers also cannot expect their readers to understand the story without this "context".

The one response which fell outside the researcher's definition of creative non-fiction was "context on-line documentary technique and images with text in photojournalism". This is because this study is restricted to print, rather than visual communication.

As can be seen in Table 6.3, the responses to this question demonstrate how widely creative non-fiction techniques are taught in Australian universities. The researcher expected 'theme' to be one of the most selected areas, as it is an integral part of feature writing (a publishing style taught at all but one university). While 73 percent of departments taught theme, this was not the most widely taught technique. The use of evocative description and writer's point of view (both 82 percent) were the most selected options.

Question 7

Are there any techniques not offered in your program you would like to include? If so please list them and provide the reason for your choices.

The next question asked if there were any techniques not offered in the respondents' programs they would like to include. No respondents asked for any specific additional techniques. This shows that while the respondents did not always have all the subjects or publication styles they would like included in their programs, they were able to control the range of techniques on offer.

Question 8

At your institution which of the following publication styles are offered as part of the journalism curriculum? Literary/New journalism; Memoir; Biography; Literary essay; Narrative non-fiction; Feature articles; Other.

Question 8 moved the survey on to creative non-fiction publications styles. As the table below shows, all but one journalism department taught feature articles. The representative of this university (Respondent Four) asked to remain anonymous. It is interesting to note that Respondent Four's department did not teach any of the identified creative non-fiction techniques (see Question 6) nor any of the publications styles (see

Table 6.4 below). The respondent did, however, state that the department offered students at least one hour a year of ‘feature writing’ (Question 4). Due to this anomaly, a search of the university’s website for a subject for feature writing was conducted, but as stated by Respondent Four, no features subject appeared to exist.

TABLE 6.4

Q.8 Frequencies		Responses	
		Yes	
Publication styles (creative non-fiction)	Literary journalism	15	68.2
	Memoir	5	22.7
	Biography	8	36.4
	Literary essay	6	27.3
	Narrative non-fiction	14	63.6
	Feature articles	21	95.5
	Other	2	9.1

Another result that was difficult to explain was that while only 14 respondents said they taught literary journalism for at least one hour per year (Question 4) 15 respondents said the publication style of literary journalism was taught at their university as part of the journalism curriculum. Despite these anomalous responses, the three most popular styles with universities are clear – feature articles (95.5 percent), literary journalism (68 percent) and the versatile narrative non-fiction (63 percent).

The two respondents who ticked ‘other’ listed documentary and profile, and colour and opinion as their extra publication styles. Documentary is not included in the scope of this study, as it is confined to print media and documentary is a form of broadcast media. Profile, colour and opinion are styles of feature article, so these were not treated as separate publication styles.

Question 9

Are there any publication styles not offered in your program you would like to include? If so please list them and provide the reason for your choices.

The next question asked respondents if there were any publication styles they would like to include in their curriculum that were not available at the time. Four respondents said there were publishing styles they were interested in, but only two of them listed creative non-fiction publishing styles.

Q.9 Extra publishing style?

TABLE 6.5

	Frequency	Percent
Valid NO	18	81.8
YES	4	18.2
Total	22	100

Q.9 Is the style creative non-fiction?

TABLE 6.6

	Frequency	Percent
Valid NO	20	90.9
YES	2	9.1
Total	22	100.

Respondent 16 stated he wished to include ‘essay journalism’ in the program of his university. He listed the *New Yorker* and *The Monthly* as publishers of ‘essay journalism’. Undoubtedly what Lee Gutkind would say is that ‘essay journalism’, like the *New Yorker*’s own term of ‘reporting’, is just another way of saying ‘creative non-fiction’.

Michael Bromley (2006, p. 2) of the University of Queensland wished for many styles, in fact, such a number that he said there were “too many to list”. His other responses in the survey, including his interest in storytelling and his agreement that journalism students would benefit from creative non-fiction, suggests that at least one of these many styles would fall under the banner of creative non-fiction.

Question 10

In the journalism program at your institution which of the following levels of instruction in media ethics are offered: More than one subject devoted to the study of ethics alone, one subject devoted to the study of ethics alone, one subject devoted to the study of ethics and law together, one subject that includes the study of ethics in part, no study of ethics.

Question 10 asked respondents about the levels of ethics offered in their journalism departments. This question was asked as the issue of truth in creative non-fiction is such a contentious one (see Section 7 of the Literature Review). This question provided base line data for Question 17 which asked if instruction in ethics and adherence to the truth is as important for students studying creative non-fiction writing techniques as students studying ‘traditional’ journalism writing techniques. These questions were necessary as it was believed that if respondents were particularly opinionated about the issues surrounding creative non-fiction and the truth, they would reveal these opinions in Question 17’s qualitative response section.

TABLE 6.7

Q.10 Frequencies		Responses	
		Yes	
Level of ethics	More than one subject devoted to ethics alone	4	18.2
	One subject devoted to ethics alone	8	36.4
	One subject devoted to ethics & law together	11	50.0
	One subject which includes ethics in part	7	31.8

The responses showed that all universities surveyed provided journalism students with at least some instruction in ethics. The most common response was that ethics was taught in a combined subject with law (50 percent), with universities providing a subject solely on ethics the next most popular option (36 percent), and universities which included ethics in part coming a close third (31 percent).

Questions 11 and 12

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is very important and 1 is not important at all, how would you rank the importance of teaching ‘traditional’ journalism writing techniques (for example the inverted pyramid structure, paraphrasing for attribution, and news voice) to journalism students?

12. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is very important and 1 is not important at all, how would you rank the importance of teaching creative non-fiction writing techniques (for example writing dialogue, action oriented scenes, and evocative description) to journalism students?

The next two questions asked respondents to rank the importance of writing techniques from one to 10 (where 10 is very important and one is not important at all). Question 11 asked respondents to rank the importance of ‘traditional’ writing techniques and Question 12 asked about creative non-fiction writing techniques. For the purposes of grouping the responses, a rank of 1-4 was considered a negative response and a rank of 5-10 was considered a positive response. Those respondents who ranked creative non-fiction 5 or higher have been highlighted in blue in Table 6.8 below.

TABLE 6.8

No.	Institution Name	Respondent Name	Traditional J Rank /10	CNF rank /10
1	Bond University	Mark Pearson	10	7
2	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	5
3	Charles Sturt University	Christopher McGillion	10	3
4	Anonymous	Anonymous	8	3
5	Griffith (Nathan, Logan)	Michael Meadows	8	8
6	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	4
7	Murdoch University	Christopher Smyth	9	3
8	QUT	Leo Bowman	9	6
9	RMIT	Matthew Ricketson	10	10
10	University of Canberra	Jolyon Sykes	8	3
11	University of Newcastle	Stephen McIlwaine	10	10
12	UniSA (undergraduate)	Kathryn Bowd	10	2
13	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	5
14	Sunshine Coast	Stephen Lamble	10	3
15	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	2
16	Anonymous	Anonymous	8	8
17	University of Wollongong	Stephen Tanner	10	10
18	UniSA (postgraduate)	Ian Richards	10	2
19	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	9
20	University of Queensland	Michael Bromley	3	8
21	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	8
22	Anonymous	Anonymous	10	5
		AVERAGE	9	6

In reply to these questions a range of responses emerged. The majority of respondents ranked traditional journalism techniques between eight and 10. These responses were expected as the styles listed under this heading (the inverted pyramid structure, paraphrasing for attribution, news voice etc) provide the foundation for tertiary

journalism education. The responses for creative non-fiction techniques were much more varied.

As can be seen in Table 6.8 above, responses ranged from two to 10, with an average response of six – a positive response. The averages show that most journalism department heads see traditional techniques (an average of nine) as more important than creative non-fiction (an average of six). This result was expected, however, what was not, was that six respondents out of 22 (27 percent) stated that creative non-fiction techniques were as, or even more, important than traditional techniques.

Question 13

What are the reasons behind the ranking you gave to the importance of ‘traditional’ journalism writing techniques and creative non-fiction writing techniques?

The next question asked respondents to explain the rankings they had given in Questions 11 and 12. This qualitative question was designed to urge the respondents to compare the different techniques and explain the strengths and weaknesses of each. The responses fell into two major categories – those who had a positive view of creative non-fiction techniques and those who had a more negative view. Within these categories responses showed that there was an increasing need for creative non-fiction techniques in the marketplace, a call for extended learning in universities, issues within departments, a negative view of creativity and problems with the use of the genre in industry.

Question 14

Do you think it would be worthwhile to isolate creative non-fiction writing techniques into a single subject housed within the journalism curriculum?

The next question in the survey asked if it was worthwhile to isolate creative non-fiction writing techniques into a single subject housed within the journalism curriculum. Opinion was split almost down the middle with just over half the respondents (55 percent) stating a single subject of creative non-fiction was worthwhile.

TABLE 6.9

Q.14 Frequencies		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	10	45.5
	Yes	12	54.5

Respondents were also asked for reasons for their choices. Unlike responses to the previous question, the responses here were not always focused on negative and positive views of creative non-fiction. Instead the answers revealed a great deal about opinions on how courses should be structured in general. The reasons respondents said creative non-fiction writing techniques should be housed in a single subject fell under the categories of time available and level of exploration. Those respondents who stated creative non-fiction writing techniques should not be housed in one subject explained their answers through an examination of time and which department should teach creative non-fiction. There were also respondents who thought no technique should be isolated into a single subject, instead techniques should be incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum.

Questions 15 and 16

15. Do you think it would be worthwhile for journalism students to learn how to write for creative non-fiction publication styles (such as literary journalism, memoir, biography, literary essay, feature articles and narrative non-fiction)?

16. Do you think it would be worthwhile for journalism students to learn creative non-fiction techniques such as the use of action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation, and point of view?

Questions 15 and 16 took the core of the study – what creative non-fiction’s place is in tertiary journalism education – to the next step. These questions asked whether or not it would be worthwhile for journalism students to learn creative non-fiction’s publication styles and techniques. While the responses to these questions revealed the current state of creative non-fiction in journalism education, they also provided a clue to the future of the genre.

TABLE 6.10

Q. 15 Frequencies		Frequency	Percent
Is it worthwhile for journalism students to learn creative non-fiction publication styles?	No	1	4.5
	Yes	21	95.5

The results of Question 15 paint a clear picture of the views of the heads of journalism departments. All but one respondent agreed that journalism students would benefit from learning creative non-fiction. This question was particularly important as it not only gauged the respondents' views of the styles listed (literary journalism, memoir, biography, literary essay, feature articles and narrative non-fiction) but it also encapsulated many of the other issues about creative non-fiction. This is because a student cannot learn to write these publication styles without first learning the techniques of creative non-fiction, or, one would hope, the ethical responsibilities of the styles.

The reasons why the respondents thought creative non-fiction was worthwhile for journalism students were that the genre created a wide knowledge base for students and it was useful as an elective and as a postgraduate offering. The reason why it was not thought to be worthwhile was because there is not enough room in the journalism curriculum and the genre is too confusing for students.

TABLE 6.11

Question 16. Frequencies		Frequency	Percent
Is it worthwhile for journalism students to learn creative non-fiction techniques?	No	2	9.1
	Yes	20	90.9

Question 16 may seem redundant as Question 12 asked what rank out of 10 the respondent would give creative non-fiction techniques and Question 13 asked for the respondents' reason behind the rankings of traditional and creative non-fiction techniques. Despite these other questions, this enquiry was included in the survey because it allowed respondents to voice opinions about the genre, without comparing its techniques to those of traditional journalism.

This question had a surprising result: two respondents did not think creative non-fiction techniques were worth teaching. One negative response was anticipated, as Stephen Lamble from the University of the Sunshine Coast had responded negatively to Question 15, and it is impossible to learn how to write creative non-fiction publishing styles without the use of creative non-fiction techniques. So while Lamble was expected to also answer ‘no’ to this question, it was thought to be highly unlikely that someone could answer ‘yes’ to the publishing styles and ‘no’ to the techniques. Nevertheless, this is what occurred.

Despite this anomaly, having 91 percent of respondents stating that it was worthwhile for journalism students to learn creative non-fiction techniques was encouraging for the genre. Many respondents asked the researcher to refer to earlier questions in response to this one (which was expected as this question was very similar to Question 12), yet there were some new and interesting explanations provided. These included the way the genre expands students’ understanding of writing, improving journalism’s quality and the benefits of storytelling. The reasons why the techniques were not thought worthwhile were that they were taught by other departments and that the techniques were too ambitious for students.

Question 17

Do you think instruction in ethics and adherence to the truth is as important for students studying creative non-fiction writing techniques as students studying ‘traditional’ journalism writing techniques?

This question was included to allow respondents to speak to the perceived dichotomy between the use of the truth in journalism and creative non-fiction that exists in the literature, the academe and the journalism community.

TABLE 6.12

Q. 17 Frequencies	Frequency	Percent
No	1	4.5
Don’t know	1	4.5
Yes	20	90.9

The table above shows that an overwhelming number of respondents (91 percent) believed instruction in ethics and adherence to the truth is as important for students studying creative non-fiction writing techniques as students studying ‘traditional’ journalism writing techniques. It was surprising to see that despite the problems many academics had with truth telling in creative non-fiction (see Section 7 of Chapter 2), not a single respondent stated that creative non-fiction students needed more instruction in ethics and adherence to truth than ‘traditional’ journalism students.

While this question did show how important adherence to the truth was to academics, what was both unexpected and enlightening about the respondents was how they classified creative non-fiction when explaining their responses. Overwhelmingly respondents referred to creative non-fiction as part of journalism. Of the 17 respondents who answered ‘yes’ and provided explanations for their answers, 11 directly referred to creative non-fiction and journalism as being the same. Another four respondents did not separate creative non-fiction and journalism. There were also two respondents who did not discuss the nature of journalism or creative non-fiction, but instead commented on issues about what truth is. Three did not provide reasons for their responses.

The respondent (Respondent.19, 2006) who answered “Don’t know,” explained her response by stating: “This depends on how you define creative non-fiction”. The only respondent who answered that ethics instruction was not as important for creative non-fiction students, Respondent Six, did not provide a reason for her response. Unfortunately, it is difficult to deduce the reasons behind her decision. This is because in earlier answers she stated her department taught all traditional and creative non-fiction techniques and publication styles and her longer responses revealed nothing about her views on the truth. What is clear from her response to Question 19, was that she saw creative non-fiction as part of journalism.

Question 18

18. Before this survey, had you heard of the term ‘creative non-fiction’?

This question asked respondents if they had heard of the term ‘creative non-fiction’ before being approached to complete the survey. The question was designed to reveal whether or not the term was widely known.

TABLE 6.13

Q.18	Frequency	Percent
Yes	22	100

A result of 100 percent was encouraging, considering when the researcher first began this study three and a half years ago, it was difficult to find anyone in Australia who had heard of this genre of writing. In fact, at the 2004 Journalism Education Association conference, the researcher’s conference paper on creative non-fiction was the first time at least five academics who approached the researcher had heard of the genre.

The reason for this apparent increase in knowledge of the genre could be attributed to the publicity and interest in creative non-fiction that has organically increased over time, or perhaps the researcher, through her work, has increased knowledge amongst the journalism community.

Question 19

19. What is your opinion of creative non-fiction?

This question was designed to elicit the respondents’ opinions of creative non-fiction, without the added issue of educational needs influencing their responses. While this was a qualitative question, the responses were categorised by the researcher as either positive or negative opinions of creative non-fiction. The results were overwhelmingly positive with 82 percent categorised this way and only 18 percent categorised as negative.

TABLE 6.14

Q.19 Frequencies		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Negative	4	18.2
	Positive	18	81.8

The positive responses included those respondents (11 out of 22) who stated it was a valuable genre; those who thought it was valuable, but only for advanced students/writers; and those who discussed the name of the genre rather than its merits. Negative responses (four out of 22) showed some respondents were not interested in the genre, thought it was unappealing, pretentious, or could be confusing for students.

Question 20

What style(s) of writing have you had published? Hard news story/ Feature article/ Literary journalism/ Memoir/ Biography/ Personal essay/ Narrative non-fiction/ Other (please stipulate).

This question moved the survey from the opinions of the respondents, to autobiographical information about them. This question asked what styles of writing the respondents had published. The question was included to see what conclusions could be reached from comparing the view of creative non-fiction with the publishing history of a respondent.

TABLE 6.15

Q.20 Frequencies		Responses	
Respondents' publishing styles	Hard news	21	95.5
	Feature	21	95.5
	Literary journalism	6	27.3
	Memoir	6	27.3
	Biography	8	36.4
	Personal essay	13	59.1
	Narrative non-fiction	11	50.0
	Other	12	54.5

The two most popular styles selected by respondents, were also the most conventional – hard news and feature writing. They were both selected by 21 out of 22 respondents (97 percent). Personal essay (59 percent) and narrative non-fiction (50 percent) were the next most popular with biography (36 percent), memoir (27 percent) and literary journalism (27 percent) rounding out the bottom three. It was interesting to note that

despite the respect the journalism and academic communities have for literary journalism, and the suspicion these groups have for memoir, the styles have been published by the same number of respondents – just six out of 22.

Question 21

What subjects have you yourself taught at in the last five years? Hard news writing/ Writing for television news/ Writing for radio news/ Writing for new media/ Feature writing/ Literary journalism/ Other.

This question, like the previous one, sought to understand more about the backgrounds of the respondents. It was also included to see what conclusions could be drawn from a comparison of respondents' views of creative non-fiction with what subjects they taught.

TABLE 6.16

Q.21 Frequencies		Responses	
Subjects respondents have taught in the last five years	Hard news	19	86.4
	TV news	6	27.3
	Radio news	10	45.5
	New media	10	45.5
	Feature writing	17	77.3
	Literary journalism	7	31.8
	Other	8	36.4

There was a clear leader in this question, with 86 percent of respondents stating they had taught hard news in the past five years. The other popular choice was Feature writing with 17 out of 22 respondents teaching this subject. The numbers drop significantly at this point, with new media and radio both taught by 46 percent of respondents, literary journalism taught by 32 percent and finally 27 percent of respondents having taught television news.

What is clear from these results is that while only a small number of respondents have taught literary journalism (32 percent) this has not dampened their enthusiasm for creative non-fiction (82 percent of respondents had positive opinions of the genre – see

Question 19). This could perhaps be explained by the high number (78 percent) of respondents who have taught another creative non-fiction style – feature writing – and their personal interests.

Questions 22 and 23

22. How many years have you taught tertiary education?

23. Have you worked as a professional journalist and if so for how long?

Like Question 21, these questions were designed to provide biographical material about the respondents. What the responses showed is that all the academics surveyed have at least eight years professional journalism experience and at least two years teaching experience. It was also hoped that this question may reveal some answers to the respondents' points of view about creative non-fiction.

TABLE 6.17

Q.22 and Q. 23	Minimum years	Maximum years	Mean
Q.22 Years teaching	2	18	11.50
Q.23 Years as a professional journalist	8	39	17.45

Part Two – In-depth reportage of qualitative results and key findings

6.3 Introduction

This stage of the research revealed a number of new and interesting views on creative non-fiction and journalism. Firstly, the survey showed there was a positive view of creative non-fiction and it explained many of the reasons for this. Secondly, the survey revealed some academics' negative views of creative non-fiction and some reasons why these exist. Most surprisingly, the survey revealed that regardless of the respondents' views on creative non-fiction, the majority of them referred to the genre as a form or style of journalism. This finding is instrumental in answering the research question, 'What is

creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' and is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The survey findings are discussed under the following headings:

1. Definitions of creative non-fiction
2. The popularity of certain publication styles
3. The truth
4. Students' capabilities
5. Time
6. Pedagogy
7. Creative non-fiction as an elective
8. Creative non-fiction as an advanced course
9. Which department should teach creative non-fiction
10. The function of universities
11. Importance of storytelling, quality and creativity
12. Industry requirements: no need for creative non-fiction
13. Industry requirements: increasing need for creative non-fiction
14. Creative non-fiction as a form of journalism

6.4 Where we are now – qualitative results and discussion

6.4.1 Definitions of creative non-fiction

Respondent 19 (2006) was the only person surveyed who answered "Don't know" to a question, and to explain her response she stated, "This depends on how you define creative non-fiction". With that comment, the respondent raised an issue that was so integral to this study that it provided the reason for the first research question – 'What is creative non-fiction?'. This question was answered in Chapter 4 of this study through the development of a definition based on the literature and interviews with creative non-fiction elites. The techniques and publishing styles included in this definition were used in the survey as variables and to help define the genre for the respondents.

The Literature Review (Chapter 2) explained the foundations for creative non-fiction – literary and narrative journalism. This, combined with the views of the elites in Chapter 4, revealed some of the arguments surrounding the appropriate name for this genre that blends fact with the techniques of the fiction writer. The argument for the term ‘creative non-fiction’ is that it incorporates the nature of the genre (that it is creative and factual) and includes publishing styles not normally associated with journalism (such as memoir and literary essays). As Bill Roorbach (2001, p. 2) stated in *Creative non-fiction: the art of truth*, “But none [no term] is any more accurate or inclusive than ‘creative non-fiction,’ and some are less accurate, and too exclusive”. The term ‘literary journalism’ falls under this “exclusive” banner yet it was preferred by three out of the 22 respondents – Matthew Ricketson, Michael Meadows and Christopher Smyth.

When asked to comment on creative non-fiction, Ricketson (who at the time of the survey was the head of the journalism program at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology), continually referred to the genre as literary journalism. This is perhaps because literary journalism is a primary research area for Ricketson and one in which he has distinguished himself. He explained what he saw as the difference between the two terms:

The distinction I make between creative non-fiction and literary journalism is that the primary impulse behind the former is looking inward while the primary impulse behind the latter is looking outward. That is, literary journalism remains tied, albeit sometimes loosely, to the news and issues of the day. (Ricketson, 2005)

It is certainly true that literary journalism is tied to the news of the day, while memoir may not be topical in any way. However, creative non-fiction does not only include memoir and other types of personal narrative, it also incorporates news oriented styles such as narrative journalism and biography (Gutkind, 2001, p. 170).

With all the arguments that exist about terminology it was no surprise that Ricketson (2005) acknowledged them, stating “...there is no especially good or widely accepted

term for this area of writing”. Mark Pearson (2005) of Bond University would agree, as he stated that while creative non-fiction was a worthwhile genre, “The term itself still needs to prove its worth as the best form of description of the styles it claims to encapsulate.”

Michael Meadows (2005) of Griffith University (Nathan and Logan campuses) also had issues with the term ‘creative non-fiction’, stating, “I think it has a place in journalism programs but the name is a little self-conscious. Why not simply teach the techniques under a journalism heading?” As explained above, the reason why a journalism heading is inappropriate is because the genre includes styles that are not always associated with journalism – such as memoir and literary essays.

Christopher Smyth (2005) from Murdoch University did not criticise or praise the term creative non-fiction; instead he stated: “It’s as loose — and interesting — a term as ‘literary journalism.’” Creative non-fiction is a loose term in that it embraces a wide range of publication styles and techniques. However, there is an overarching philosophy at work with this genre of writing – that it is composed of works of high quality which reach the emotional truth of the story and utilise creative structures (see Chapter 4, Section 8).

6.4.2 The popularity of certain publication styles

The survey confirmed what the researcher had suspected about the popularity of creative non-fiction publication styles – that among academics the feature article is the most popular style and that memoir is the least popular.

The reasons behind the popularity of feature articles (95 percent of respondents answered this style was taught in their program) are clear. This publication style has long been accepted by the journalism community and its place in every daily newspaper cements features in the journalism area. Features are also seen as viable for students to learn as they have the opportunity to sell them, or write them in a staff position, early in their careers (particularly if they work for a magazine).

The next most selected style was literary journalism (68 percent). This result could be explained because of the style's extensive history, its popularity (particularly during the many of the respondents' youths, the 1960's and '70's) and acceptance in the journalism world. After all, the term uses the word 'journalism' and is found in many journalism text books (for example *The Daily Miracle* (1997) by Conley, *Writing Feature Stories* (2004) by Ricketson and *Professional Feature Writing* (2004) by Bruce Garrison). The reason for the relative popularity of narrative non-fiction (64 percent) may be its nature as an expansive style. It includes applications to any subject – as long as a piece of writing is written as a 'story' and is non-fiction, it falls into this style.

Unsurprisingly the more literary and controversial styles of memoir (23 percent), literary essay (27 percent) and biography (36 percent) were significantly less popular than the other styles. The least popular of all – memoir – has also received the most criticism for being prone to bending the truth (Freedman, 2006, p. 50).

Memoir's poor reputation stems from some notably fraudulent books, such as *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey (famous for being praised then reviled by Oprah Winfrey) and Vivian Gornick's *Fierce Attachments* which she revealed contained fictional scenes (Freedman, 2006, pp. 50,51). While there are those authors who think there is some grey area in memoir, the prevailing theory amongst the literature, the elites in the Stage Two interviews in this study and (judging by the uproar surrounding Frey's deception) the public, is that if composite characters are created, or scenes are made up, it is no longer memoir, it is fiction. Readers will accept the failings of memory, but not outright fabrication. As Maureen Corrigan, literature professor and book critic, said in a commentary on Frey on American National Public Radio:

What lying does do is damage the relationship between reader and memoirist... it's the autobiographer's pledge to try to tell the truth that makes a reader respond differently.... And when this quaint contract turns out to be a con, we feel like rubes. (Freedman, 2006, p. 51)

This argument leads into the next important issue to arise from the survey, that of the truth.

6.4.3 The Truth

The Literature Review (Chapter 2) revealed how vehement the arguments are over creative non-fiction writers' treatment of the facts and if this is any different from the way hard news journalists face the issue. This has been a talking point for academics in the United States and, through this survey, it is clear that it is also an issue for their Australian counterparts.

What the survey revealed was that while the respondents may have disagreed over whether students of creative non-fiction need different instruction in ethics and the truth than journalism students, they were all uncompromising when it came to any genre which purports to be non-fiction fabricating even a single piece of information.

While issues of accuracy and factuality are important when the truth is considered, there are other factors at work. For some, any discussion of the truth is a discussion of philosophy. This was the case for two of the respondents. Respondent Four (2005) stated, "I'd call it accuracy. I have difficulties with the notion of truth." Michael Bromley (2006) simply asked the age old question, "But what is 'truth'?" Finding an answer for that question is for another study, however, in the context of this survey the definition for the truth did not move into more profound areas than the dictionary definition: "true /tre:/ *adj* (-r, -st) **1** corresponding to true facts" (Cowie, 1989, p. 1374).

Moving on from definitions of the truth, there were 21 respondents whose statements showed they see writers of both creative non-fiction and journalism as equally responsible to their readers and to the ethical imperative of only reporting the facts. As Leo Bowman (2005) from the Queensland University of Technology stated, "If the word non-fiction is important at all then the piece is aimed at uncovering 'truth' in some definable way."

Mark Pearson explained his views about the truth while referring to creative non-fiction and journalism as the same genre (a categorisation made by the majority of the respondents and discussed in Section 2.14). “It is the crucial point of difference between fiction and non-fiction, and therefore they must know the distinction intimately and be able to articulate their justification for their variations on the theme of TRUTH.”

Charles Sturt University’s Christopher McGillion (2005) also spoke about writers in general, “This is a complex issue but my response basically acknowledges the responsibility on writers to their readers.” This response echoes much of the literature about the truth which speaks to the ‘contract’ that the writer has with the reader (Clark, 2000, p. 3; Freedman, 2006; Kirtz 1996, p. 2) This was an idea also raised by Helen Garner (2005, p. 1) in her elite interview: “I think in that kind of writing that you have a contract with the reader and the contract is that you don’t invent things.”

Both Respondent Two and Michael Meadows were succinct, stating that without adherence to facts and ethics, “...it is not journalism, it is fiction” (Meadows, 2005). Respondent 13 (2005) was also uncompromising, “Ethics must be taught no matter what genre of journalism is practised if it is to be respected by the public.” Jolyon Sykes (2005) of the University of Canberra had an almost identical response: “Ethical practice is vital for all forms of journalism, especially if real people are to be represented with a creative interpretation.”

Stephen Tanner (2005) of the University of Wollongong demonstrated his belief in the importance of the truth by stating “At the end of the day, if they [students] are working as journalists they need to adhere to the ethical principles that underpin the profession.” Respondent 15 (2005) made a similar point, “Journalism must always be truthful.”

The University of Newcastle’s Stephen McIlwaine explored the ideas behind the importance of truth in society and how valuable it is for journalism students to be aware of the arguments about truth and be encouraged to be involved in those arguments.

Respondent 21 (2006) also explained that students need to understand concepts of ‘truth’ in journalism and non fiction, “They need to know the implications of the MEAA code of ethics for journalists — fabrication of quotes leads to automatic fail in journalism subjects at [name of respondent’s university].”

Ian Richards was another respondent who spoke about truth in a university setting, writing about journalism lecturers’ role in building up public trust in journalism through teaching students not to bend the truth.

Reporting what actually happened is the main quality which distinguishes journalism from fiction. Why would journalism lecturers encourage students to eliminate this quality from their work thereby converting their journalism to fiction? (Richards, 2005)

For his response, Matthew Ricketson asked the researcher to refer to his textbook *Writing Feature Stories*. In his chapter on Literary Journalism, Ricketson, like Richards, looked at the relationship between journalism and fiction,

The primary task of journalism is to gain accurate information about a news event. A novelist’s primary task is to tell a compelling story. The two activities share a core belief in the necessity and virtue of constructing the world into a narrative. The difference is the journalist’s story is true. (Ricketson, 2004, p. 232)

Kathryn Bowd (2005), the undergraduate program director at the University of South Australia, waded into the differences between journalism and genres which exist to entertain the reader: “Creative non-fiction which is not informed by ethical standards or the need for accuracy and honesty in reporting could be considered entertainment rather than journalism.” This is an interesting distinction – perhaps a little like the distinction in television between news/current affairs and ‘infotainment’ (for example *The Great Outdoors*, *Getaway* and *Better Homes and Gardens*).

Creative non-fiction experts (such as the elites interviewed in this study – and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) have stated that creative non-fiction that includes false information is actually fiction. They have also stated that a work of creative non-fiction must engage the reader emotionally – that it must entertain. Bowd’s comment presents the point of view that journalism is not (at least primarily) a means of entertaining the reader, that it has a different purpose, one which can be assumed to be informing the reader. Bowd was not alone in broaching the notion of creative non-fiction and journalism having different purposes. Bill Roorbach (2004, p. 1) addressed the issue in his Stage One elite interview, when he stated that journalism aspired to information while creative non-fiction aspires to art.

However, this point of view was opposed by Tanner (2005) who stated: “One of the fundamental tenets of journalism has always been entertainment.” There are also the comments of the elites in Stage Two of the study to be considered. Helen Garner and Hugh Lunn, both writing veterans, stated that no matter what the style of writing, stories should be interesting.

Christopher Smyth (2005) was the most succinct respondent of all, simply stating that there should be “No difference” in the way that truth and ethics are taught to students of creative non-fiction and journalism. While his comments are concise to say the least, Smyth makes an excellent point. When it comes to telling the truth there is no difference between creative non-fiction and journalism (no matter how interesting, entertaining or artful the writer would like the work to be).

In academe and in industry the idea exists that creative non-fiction writers are more likely to bend the truth than are their hard news counterparts because they utilise creative structures or literary language. Yet this seems to be a difficult case to prove because for every James Frey there is a Jayson Blair (sacked from the *New York Times* in 2003 for fabricating parts of his news stories (Sutherland, 2003)). So, while this attitude persists, this survey has shown that it is not one which is at the fore of many Australian academics’ minds. No respondent stated that creative non-fiction students needed more

instruction in the truth than ‘traditional’ journalism students. Despite this, a small number did worry that journalism students may not understand some of the ethical challenges of blending fiction writing techniques with facts. These concerns are discussed in the following section.

6.4.4 Students’ capabilities

While truth telling has always been a focus of this study, it was not until this survey that it became clear that the truth is part of a different issue that stands in the way of creative non-fiction being included in Australian journalism curricula. A number of respondents to the survey voiced certain opinions about journalism students. Their views were that students are:

- Unable to understand that they must be as truthful with creative non-fiction as they are with inverted pyramid stories.
- Incapable of understanding the difference between creative non-fiction and hard news.
- Not competent enough to use the techniques of creative non-fiction to produce the publishing styles of the genre.

Ian Richards elaborated:

Most students have considerable difficulty in mastering traditional news writing techniques. Adding creative non-fiction techniques is generally confusing for many students, and reduces their ability to master traditional techniques. (Richards, 2005)

The notion of confusion was also raised by Respondent 15, who clearly had a negative view of creative non-fiction:

It [creative non-fiction] may be confusing for students, and it may give them incorrect expectations of the work of a journalist. A lot of creative non-fiction is unpublishable and self-indulgent, attributes that would not be tolerated in most newsrooms. (Respondent.15, 2005)

Stephen Lamble from the University of the Sunshine Coast also presented a negative view of the genre. He stated he did not believe teaching creative non-fiction publishing styles was worthwhile, ranked creative non-fiction's importance 3/10 and stated that it was not worthwhile to isolate creative non-fiction into a single subject. He also indicated that while his department taught feature writing, it did not teach literary journalism nor any creative non-fiction techniques, including theme. Lamble also shared Richards, and Respondent 15's fears that the genre may confuse students:

It could also be argued that creative non-fiction is a specialised style that would be best not employed by beginning journalists because of its potential to cause confusion through its mix of fact, commentary and opinion.
(Lamble, 2005)

The researcher's experience with teaching creative non-fiction is that students are not confused by creative non-fiction techniques. They are certainly challenged by the genre, but they are able to decide when to use the inverted pyramid and a traditional news voice, and when the writer's point of view and theme-based structure is more appropriate.

Respondent 22 (2006) echoed Richards' ideas when he raised students' abilities as a reason for creative non-fiction publishing styles to be taught as an elective, "Depends on the calibre of students; useless to teach these forms if the students are almost illiterate, and do not know the basic parts of speech." Respondent 22 (2006) did put a qualifier on this remark, admitting that it may be the years of teaching that have left him with his opinion of students' abilities: "... (goodness, I'm sounding like an old fart)."

The views of these respondents seem unfair, especially considering that other departments, like the ones some respondents have pointed to in other responses — creative writing, English and film and television — ask their students to write complex short stories, poetry, short films and even feature films. All these forms use many of the same techniques as creative non-fiction, such as narrative structure, characterisation, literary language, dialogue, action oriented scenes and theme. The academics in creative writing and film and television departments expect their undergraduate students to learn,

practice and use these techniques to produce the publication styles of their respective genres. These students are also expected to know the difference between poetry and novels, or literary essays and short stories, or romance and horror, or documentary and short films, or feature films and video clips etc. These departments also ask their students to understand and incorporate the differences between fiction and non-fiction styles in their work.

There could not be a defensible argument that across the board, journalism students are less intelligent or less industrious than students who study other writing disciplines. Yet, perhaps senior academics in creative writing or film and television department also doubt the abilities of their students to master the tasks they are assigned.

6.4.5 Time

Time was an issue raised in the Stage Two elite interviews in relation to the different deadlines in creative non-fiction and journalism, and it was surprising that concerns over time were also raised in this survey. However, rather than time being discussed as part of the professional arena, the issue that arose from the survey was that of time constraints in journalism courses. In reply to a variety of questions, the respondents cited a lack of time to teach a range of disciplines to journalism students.

Kathryn Bowd stated she saw traditional techniques as vastly more important than creative non-fiction techniques because of what she described as the limited constraints of a standard bachelors degree,

It is challenging enough to adequately cover the essentials of traditional journalism in a three-year undergrad degree (or less for postgrad students). Adding creative non-fiction would put pressure on other areas of the curriculum, and create potential for confusion among students. (Bowd, 2005)

Stephen Lambie had a similar response to Bowd, reinforcing the importance of traditional techniques over more literary styles,

There is little enough room in the journalism curriculum to teach the essentials of journalism (news writing, j-law, ethics, feature writing, online writing, sub-editing, computer-assisted reporting, etc). (Lamble, 2005, p. 3)

Christopher Smyth also spoke directly to the demands on time in university courses. Smyth's views were in response to Question 14 which asked if it was worthwhile introducing a single subject devoted to creative non-fiction writing techniques into the journalism curriculum. He stated that it was not possible to add additional techniques into units taught by his department as they were too busy covering and practising what he described as the traditional "more commonly published" (Smyth, 2005, p. 3) and broadcast forms of journalism.

Smyth (2005) explained that adding creative non-fiction techniques to these units would cause complexity, distraction and over-work for the other courses and it would not do the techniques justice, "Lit journalism needs time to explore and BREAK boundaries, rather than the exacting discipline of keeping within them (as per news writing, for instance)." While it is clear from his comments that Smyth appreciates the style of literary journalism, it is also evident that he can find no room for it in his current offerings. Instead, he has asked for a separate subject so the time necessary to examine all its techniques can be devoted to it.

Matthew Ricketson had a similar view to Smyth, detailing the importance of devoting time to creative non-fiction. He stated that "...because of the competing demands on curriculum time... it is more likely that a single course is the best way to teach these areas" (Ricketson, 2005).

Ian Richards was also interested in having creative non-fiction techniques housed in a single subject, but this opinion was as much about safeguarding traditional techniques as providing enough time for the genre. "I can see some benefit for students who have a particular interest in this area, and it would be fine to study this provided it is in addition to, not instead of, the core writing subjects" (Richards, 2005).

Respondent 21 also spoke to the time constraints suffered by some universities, opting for a single subject for creative non-fiction.

Obviously the option you suggest is worthwhile, however Australian universities are operating within constraints of numbers of students and teaching resources. For some it may be more appropriate to contain within another subject or make it an individual project choice. (Respondent.21, 2006)

She explained the issue, however, with the clarification that at her institution she expects students interested in creative non-fiction techniques to take electives from the writing and cultural studies degree or from the ideas and concepts in the journalism feature writing subject. Respondent 19 also made the suggestion of coupling creative non-fiction with feature writing or proposing that students take classes from the writing major, as a way to deal with time constraints.

This issue of time is often an issue of resources: if a department had more money it could employ more staff who would then have more time to teach a wider variety of subjects. As the interest in creative non-fiction is increasing (see Section 4.13) it would be worth ascertaining if, as time progresses, subjects in the genre could be money spinners for journalism departments, aiding in the curriculum limitations so many universities clearly experience. Perhaps this is a topic worth further research.

6.4.6 Pedagogy

Another unexpected theme to emerge from the survey was one that did not revolve around the similarities or differences between creative non-fiction and journalism. Instead, a number of respondents raised issues of pedagogy. They took issue with isolating any style of writing into a single subject, rather than creative non-fiction specifically.

Michael Meadows explained that creative non-fiction techniques were vital to journalism students, but this did not mean they should be isolated,

I believe the techniques [creative non-fiction] are central to creating better journalists, better story tellers, and it's best done by incorporating the techniques into general journalism teachings rather than seeing it as something separate. By all means have a stand-alone course, but I believe the techniques should be incorporated into all journalism writing courses. (2005)

Other respondents held similar views. Respondent 16 (2005) stated: "I believe in the 'integration' of techniques," and Jolyon Sykes (2005) wrote that it is "Better to teach a range of styles and genres within one subject."

Stephen Tanner (2005) made a similar point, but added where the techniques were best suited, "I believe that creative non-fiction writing can and should be permitted across a range of subjects, although not in the introductory courses". This issue of restricting creative non-fiction to more advanced courses is dealt with in Section 2.8 below.

6.4.7 Creative non-fiction as an elective.

Heads of department structure a program according to their pedagogical beliefs and part of this is what they believe are core subjects and what are electives. A number of respondents, many of whom were very positive about including creative non-fiction in journalism education, were interested in creative non-fiction as an elective.

Mark Pearson (2005) was one of these respondents and explained this stipulation, but with one exception, "Feature articles should still be central to any j-curriculum. As for the other creative non-fiction styles, instruction should be available on an elective basis for those who may wish to pursue these genres for interest or career." Despite this comment, Pearson has since included creative non-fiction in his curriculum as part of Bond University's former feature writing subject (Magazine Writing and Creative non-fiction) – cementing it as an integral part of a print journalism degree.

Christopher Smyth and Kathryn Bowd had virtually identical responses to Pearson, without making the feature writing distinction. They both stated that the styles should be

available to students if they had an interest in them, but that they should not be a core component of the degree. Students' interest was also a theme raised by Respondent 4, who wrote that students should take a subject in creative non-fiction "Only if they want to (2005)," and Jolyon Sykes who acknowledged students' attraction to creativity,

Students naturally favour creative styles while journalism is more concerned with conveying facts and informed opinion accurately and clearly. At first, it is necessary to emphasise accuracy, brevity and clarity and let the student build on that foundation if they are interested. (Sykes, 2005)

Harking back to problems with time (detailed in Section 6.4.5) Ian Richards and Respondent 19 both explained that if there was no limit to the curriculum then creative non-fiction publishing styles would be included. However, this could never occur to the exclusion of traditional journalism styles. Respondent 19 also suggested that the styles could be included in a feature writing subject. This is a valid option, and one which works successfully at Bond University.

6.4.8 Creative non-fiction as an advanced course

As mentioned above, finding the place for creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education is at the heart of this study. A number of respondents stated that its place was at advanced level.

Respondent 22 (2006) acknowledged the skill level needed to produce a quality piece of creative non-fiction: "A difficult form of journalism to pull off well; requires good teaching and receptive and intelligent students who have a significant feel for language." So did Respondent 6, but put more emphasis on the needs of entry level students. She stated that creative non-fiction, "Can be relevant to the newsroom and can be used by experienced journalists. But minimal use in basic journalism training" (Respondent.6, 2005).

Jolyon Sykes (2005) stated that creative non-fiction techniques were, "Too ambitious. Important for students to develop a clear writing style at first, then move into more

literary styles during their career.” Looking at this comment in isolation it appears Sykes did not think creative non-fiction was worth teaching to students – instead it was something better suited to journalists who decided to investigate the genre later in their career. However, when Sykes’ other comments are examined this assumption appears incorrect. Elsewhere in the questionnaire he stated that creative non-fiction publication styles are worthwhile and that the University of Canberra taught five out of the eight creative non-fiction writing techniques (including narrative structure, characterisation and evocative description). From these responses it could be hypothesised that Sykes did think creative non-fiction was worthwhile for students to learn (otherwise they would not be included in the department’s offerings) but that it should only be available once a student had reached a certain level.

While the respondents discussed above made general statements about how creative non-fiction should be taught in more advanced classes, three stated that the genre should be restricted to postgraduate students only. Respondents 13, 6 and 15 stated that creative non-fiction techniques and publication styles should be a postgraduate, not undergraduate, option.

These responses logically stem from one of three issues. The first is that there is not enough room in undergraduate programs (one of the recurrent issues raised in this survey and dealt with in Section 2.5 above). The second is the fear that undergraduate students are not capable of coping with the demands of creative non-fiction. This is an idea linked to the issues discussed in Section 2.4 above, however, these respondents do not go so far as to assert that journalism students, no matter what their level, are incapable of producing works of creative non-fiction. The third possible reason for the suggestion is the misconception that the styles are of little use in a journalist’s career.

In response to the other questions in the survey, Respondents 13 and 6 demonstrated a high usage of creative non-fiction, with their universities teaching every technique and publication style that was included in the survey. These responses seem to negate the idea that these respondents believe creative non-fiction should be a postgraduate offering

because the styles are useless in a journalist's career. Considering that respondents did not complain of time restrictions on the undergraduate degree, it seems the most likely reason for their responses was that they were unsure of how well undergraduate students would cope with the demands of creative non-fiction.

Respondent 15 also showed she was open to creative non-fiction as literary journalism, feature writing and all the creative non-fiction techniques listed in the survey are taught in her department (except for action oriented scenes and theme). However, she ranked the importance of creative non-fiction 2/10 in response to Question 12, not a particularly positive response to the genre, and in her response to Question 16 she wrote,

I am not convinced that undergrads benefit from this. Postgrads might, as part of an examination of diverse journalistic genres. But it must be kept in context and expectations about being able to publish one's own point of view or memoir should be kept realistic. (Respondent 15, 2005)

Her responses suggest that while she is in favour of teaching certain publication styles and techniques of creative non-fiction, she may wonder if undergraduate students would be able to master the genre or profit from it. Though, it seems most likely that her reasoning is a mix of the two.

Students' likelihood of publishing the genre is an important issue to stem from this survey and is discussed in Section 6.4.9 below. As far as journalism students' abilities are concerned, there is no doubt that creative non-fiction is an advanced genre of writing, after all it was defined in Chapter 4 as an artistic genre which aims for high quality and utilises creative structures. Devising the correct creative structure to fit with a story's theme and then drawing out the emotional truth of a situation is not a simple task, yet it is one necessary to produce a piece of creative non-fiction. While this is not something that an entry level student of any writing genre should be expected to tackle until they are familiar with basic concepts (such as what theme is, what structures are available, how to engage readers), it is not beyond the reach of an undergraduate in the latter stages of their degree. As discussed below, there is no reason why journalism academics should expect

writing of lower complexity and quality than film and television and creative writing departments.

6.4.9 Which department should teach creative non-fiction?

One of the core issues in this study was where creative non-fiction fits in universities. To this end, the study's second research question asks, 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?' For some universities, to the chagrin of many creative non-fiction professionals, the genre is taught in creative writing or English departments rather than in the journalism curriculum (Gutkind, 2004, p. 1).

According to five respondents, creative non-fiction techniques have almost no place in a journalism department. Respondent 4, Respondent 15, Leo Bowman, Stephen Lambie and Christopher McGillion all stated that creative non-fiction was a subject best left to creative writing departments.

Respondent 4 wrote,

Writing, which includes the creative elements, can be taken as the other major or minor. It is offered in a different faculty as part of the English dept., which has a good (creative) writing program. However, we have no objection to the mix and match. Quite a number of students chose to do it. This is why we are concentrating in our courses on what you call traditional journalism. The other ways of writing are covered elsewhere... I think it sits comfortably in the writing program (which is a good one — has produced already one Vogel prize winner). (Respondent 4, 2005)

In her response to Question 15, Respondent 4 had said that the genre's publication styles widened journalism students' skill base, so this response was a little unexpected. Perhaps this respondent appreciates that creative non-fiction opens a wider number of career doors for journalism students but these options should be at the students' request, rather than as core requirements. What is clear though, is that the respondent did not believe it was the journalism department's role to provide these options for students.

Instead they could be provided by other departments. It would be interesting to know if Respondent 4 would have provided a different response if there was not a highly successful creative writing course on offer in the English department of her university.

When Stephen Lamble (2005) responded to Question 6 (which does not ask for an extended answer) he stated that creative non-fiction techniques were not taught at his institution because, “Many journalism students complete courses in Creative Writing in which they use these techniques but they are not key elements in journalism courses except as they overlap into feature writing.” Despite another department teaching the techniques of creative non-fiction, Lamble indicated that at the University of the Sunshine Coast, the genre’s publishing styles, such as biography and narrative non-fiction, were taught as part of the journalism curriculum. While the system at Sunshine Coast is difficult to divine from the survey, what is clear is that Lamble believes creative non-fiction is not journalism and has its place in the creative writing department.

Like Lamble, Christopher McGillion made comments which pointed to a belief that creative non-fiction is better placed in departments other than journalism. He stated that in his journalism department, “We aim to produce journalists not writers in a general sense,” (McGillion, 2005) Respondent 15 (2005) stated: “It may properly belong in a creative writing course, rather than journalism.” Bowman (2005) explained, “I do not think that they are yet essential to our journalism students and those who are so inclined are able to teach these as electives within our creative writing courses.”

Though few of the responses can be categorised as negative opinions of creative non-fiction, they do represent a feeling in the academic community that creative non-fiction is not journalism. As Lee Gutkind pointed out, there are no journalism departments in the USA that house creative non-fiction, and the only journalism department that has a subject with creative non-fiction in its name is Bond University (and this is in large part due to the teaching of this researcher) (Gutkind, 2004). However, while five respondents indicated creative non-fiction did not have a place in journalism education, there was

more than double that number that directly referred to creative non-fiction as journalism (a result discussed in Section 5.4.14 below).

6.4.10 The function of universities

While the place of creative non-fiction in universities was a topic raised in the survey, so was the role of the university itself. Three respondents commented on the reason for tertiary education and how learning creative non-fiction techniques could encourage new thinking and could build on traditional techniques.

Matthew Ricketson stated that as part of universities, journalism departments had an obligation to expose students to the plethora of opportunities available,

There is also an argument, first articulated to me by Professor Mitchell Stephens of New York University, that it is not enough for journalism schools to simply teach students the traditional journalistic forms. Universities are actually very good places for students to experiment. That practice opens their minds to new things; it also means they are more likely to become future innovators in their chosen industry. (Ricketson, 2005)

Stephen McIlwaine from the University of Newcastle also stressed the significance of creative non-fiction, ranking the techniques' importance 10/10. His explanation for his response fell into the category of the university's role in promoting thought among students, though he spoke mostly about the way traditional techniques provided a basis for all other writing forms.

Stephen Tanner did not write so much about the nature of education, but instead the nature of journalism students,

...not all journalism students want to become journalists in a traditional sense. Many are far more interested in other forms of writing and I believe that creative non-fiction can provide a bridge between the traditional and future demands of journalism. (Tanner, 2005)

Tanner makes a salient point. University education is not just about job-readiness and industry practice. It is also about stimulating students' interest and showing them the enormous range of opportunities that are available in the wide world. Even if creative non-fiction was not used every day in newspapers and magazines, it could still be a valid subject choice for students as it could stimulate their imaginations and their passion for telling true stories.

The place of universities and the role of the journalism department within them is a complex one. However, what is clear is that while many departments look to challenge their students, to ask them to try the most difficult and demanding of styles (such as drama departments which ask their students to perform Shakespeare, or English departments that ask students to deconstruct Beckett, or language departments that ask students to analyse 18th century French poetry) some journalism academics maintain curricula focused solely on the basics (Stephens, 2000, p. 63). Whether or not this is an approach that produces an innovative industry that meets the changing needs of the public will be dealt with in the next chapter.

6.4.11 Importance of storytelling, quality and creativity

In reply to a number of questions, and on a number of topics, many respondents referred to the changing face of journalism and the changing interests of readers. To this end the journalism department's role in teaching students the importance of storytelling, quality and creativity in journalism was raised.

The issue of storytelling was broached by Michael Bromley (2006) who stated that, "Journalism needs to be about telling stories, and using whatever techniques are appropriate." Michael Meadows emphasised storytelling, raising the matter of reader enjoyment, "Because it is all part of telling stories... any literary devices should be used to encourage people to read... and to enjoy the activity." This is a point that Stephen Tanner also raised,

One of the fundamental tenets of journalism has always been entertainment.

Increasingly this is being pushed to the fore. I believe that creative non-

fiction techniques will be important if future generations of journalists, particularly those working in the print media, hope to compete with their electronic counterparts. (2005)

How reader enjoyment and the other issues discussed here aid the employment of graduates is discussed in Section 6.4.13 below.

Matthew Ricketson addressed storytelling when he asked that the researcher refer to the section on literary journalism in his textbook *Writing Feature Stories* (2004). In the chapter Ricketson (2004, p. 228) stated: “A core message of this book has been that journalists are storytellers.” The importance of storytelling is also a core message of creative non-fiction – that to engage readers a writer must tell them a story, not just provide them with a list of facts.

In his textbook, Ricketson also raised the issue of quality, one of the hallmarks of creative non-fiction, as discussed by the Stage One elites (see Chapter 4, Section 5.1.3).

It is worth your while knowing about literary journalism because you can benefit from seeing the possibilities inherent in your chosen vocation and because literary journalism offers an alternative to the superficiality that, by definition, characterises much daily journalism. (Ricketson, 2004, p. 229)

This point also responds to the view (held by Respondents 13 and 19 in response to Question 13) that creative non-fiction has little value for students because it is most often tackled at newspapers by senior journalists.

Ricketson (2004, p. 229) goes on to explain that journalists need role models, and considering that the profession has an image problem (journalists often finish at the bottom of most trusted profession surveys) and is preoccupied with “the here and now” some of the great literary journalists could provide students with heroes and heroines. This could also take some steps in encouraging a higher quality of journalism through students emulating these examples of industry excellence.

The relevance of quality writing in the workplace was revealed by Pearson,

There is so much more call for innovative and pertinent writing styles — and for what discerning readers may describe as ‘good writing’. Our students need to be masters of their wordsmith trade, so should be able to turn their hand to the most appropriate form of written expression for the circumstance. (Pearson, 2005)

Christopher Smyth explained the techniques of evocative description and characterisation were vital for features as many of the poor stories (written by journalists and students) were so because they were weak in these techniques. Respondent 16 (2005) stated that they allowed a better narrative and allowed “... the journalist to become a ‘writer’.”

Respondent 16 (2005) also wrote that, “Journalism has to be taught as a ‘creative’ genre,” and “This simple statement actually speaks to the nature of this study as the blend of the research and truth-telling inherent in journalism and the creativity of fiction writing, is what forms creative non-fiction.” Pearson (2005) weighed into the creativity issue explaining that the genre “... plays a valuable role in both journalism and in the broader body of literature.”

Jolyon Sykes (2005) introduced the idea of creativity benefiting the audience, “Creative interpretation of factual material... is important as it gives the reader insights beyond merely reporting the news.” This was also an issue raised by Bowd (2005) who stated creative non-fiction provided, “... a useful set of techniques to complement traditional hard news reporting. Can be particularly effective in reaching readers at an emotional, rather than or as well as, an intellectual level.”

These responses show a different view of journalism that exists in the academic community – that journalism is as much about storytelling and creativity as any other form of writing. This is a great departure from more ‘traditional’ scholars who believe that journalism should be taught through the hard news approach and creativity is best

left to creative writing departments (examples just from this study include Christopher McGillion, Respondents 4 and 15, and Leo Bowman and are discussed in Section 2.9 above).

6.4.12 Industry requirements: no need for creative non-fiction

For any discipline that seeks to produce job-ready graduates, industry-relevant education is vitally important. Journalism academics have long argued over the balance between theory and practice in the curriculum and now, it seems, over the usefulness of creative non-fiction for journalism students (Herbert, 1997, p. 12).

Eight respondents raised the fear that creative non-fiction would not aid students in their careers. This is in direct opposition to the 10 respondents reviewed in the section below who discussed the increasing opportunities presented by the genre's techniques and publication styles. Whose point of view is closer to the truth is addressed in Chapter 7.

The representatives of the University of South Australia — Bowd and Richards — had previously voiced their problems with creative non-fiction because of the constraints of the university setting, but the survey also revealed they doubted the practicality of the genre's techniques. Bowd (2005) stated: "... most students are seeking employment in mainstream journalism, where the techniques of creative non-fiction are not widely used." Richards (2005) agreed: "Given that there is minimal employment demand for students able to use creative non-fiction writing techniques, and given that most students want employment in journalism, it is logical to focus on traditional techniques."

Christopher Smyth (2005) stated: "Literary Journalism is a form that is not published to any real extent in the Australian media — students will rarely get to 'use' it." This could explain why he ranked the importance of traditional techniques 9/10 and creative non-fiction techniques 3/10. Despite this, Smyth (2005) explained that the curriculum offered at Murdoch did extend and build on the issues and techniques taught in traditional journalism units and this had a positive effect, "It teases out the ethics more starkly, too.

Eg. relationships with sources, motives, who ‘owns’ the story, eschewing ‘objectivity’ or not.”

Like Smyth, Respondent 15 (2005) questioned the genre’s ability to be accepted in mainstream newspapers, “A lot of creative non-fiction is unpublishable and self-indulgent, attributes that would not be tolerated in most newsrooms.” The attitudes this respondent speaks of should not be tolerated anywhere, though her comment that these attitudes are representative of “a lot” of creative non-fiction is difficult to substantiate, as is a belief that self indulgence is exclusive to any one genre of writing.

Respondent 6 (2005) was succinct with her reasons for creative non fiction’s irrelevance, “Newsroom practice; industry requirements.” Respondent 15 (2005) clearly spelled out his problem with creative non-fiction: “Traditional journalism skills are more relevant and useful in the industry than creative non-fiction skills.” Respondent 22 (2006) also took issue with the genre’s application, “Inverted pyramid and traditional are still useful in most forms of journalism (and vital for online) whereas creative non-fiction is significantly less relevant.”

Respondent 13 (2005) explained that at his university the course was focused on preparing students for the workforce, rather than training them in more theoretical or experimental aspects of journalism, “Because this is what the industry tells us they want their journalism graduates to have. They are less interested in literary journalism because they claim that style is left to more experienced journalists.”

Stephen Lamble (2005) stated that the creative non-fiction “... is often pretentious” and therefore much less important than the styles which he says are the foundations for journalism: “Traditional journalism writing is the bread and butter of journalism. It teaches journalism students the elements of style and grammar and to write in a disciplined way.”

Respondent 2 (2005) asked a simple but interesting question, “Where are the regional jobs for creative non-fiction?” The fact that this respondent later said in the survey that he was “Not particularly interested” in creative non-fiction points to the idea that he may have already decided there are very few uses for the genre in regional areas. This is an important issue to raise and one that is addressed in Chapter 7.

6.4.13 Industry requirements: increasing need for creative non-fiction

While there are logical concerns held by journalism academics for the relevance of a creative form of writing in what is a practical world, there is also a great deal of enthusiasm in the academy for the opportunities creative non-fiction offers graduates.

Mark Pearson (2005) stated that while traditional journalism skills are vital “... there is much more interpretative reporting today.” Pearson (2005) also explained the financial opportunities of creative non-fiction techniques “... as, firstly, devices for use in their other writing and, secondly, means of writing and income in their own right.”

Leo Bowman had a similar response to Pearson. He said: “The styles are important because creative non-fiction writing is increasingly of interest and use in the journalism and literary fields” (Bowman, 2005). Kathryn Bowd (2005) acknowledged the genre’s application despite earlier stating that creative non-fiction had limited use in newsrooms, “A single elective course in creative non-fiction writing techniques could... further develop their [students’] professional skills.”

Matthew Ricketson spoke to the role of creative non-fiction techniques in the marketplace. His words are particularly meaningful as he has conducted a great deal of research in the area, evidenced by his numerous articles and interviews on the issue (such as the article ‘The Awkward truth: The perils of writing journalistic books’ in *Overland* in 2004, and his 2005 interview for Radio National’s Media Report on literary journalism).

To work in the mainstream news media, students need to master the inverted pyramid news story as it is still the primary media form. That said, the

amount of journalism that is written in a form other than the inverted pyramid is growing, and has been for several years. Equally, the inverted pyramid form has many virtues but it also has many limitations... It is important for students to be exposed to a range of journalistic styles and forms. (Ricketson, 2005)

Stephen Tanner also stressed this importance of traditional skills while speaking of the importance of creative non-fiction techniques,

I believe journalists need a grounding in traditional journalism techniques and in the first phase of their studies the focus should be on developing these skills. However, given the changing nature of journalism, and particular the tendency towards larger magazine and feature sections, journalism students should also be able to experiment with creative non-fiction. (Tanner, 2005)

Tanner went on to point out that creative non-fiction provides a bridge between traditional and future demands of journalism. This idea is also raised in the literature, where the future of the newspaper is suggested to be tied to a reinvigoration of storytelling (Cunningham, 2003, p. 8).

Michael Meadows' views echoed those of elite interviewees Lee Gutkind and Bill Roorbach who discussed the issue of quality in creative non-fiction at length (see Chapter 4, Section 5.1.3). Meadows (2005) stated: "Readers and editors as a response are wanting good stories, not formulaic inverted pyramid pieces... so teaching 'good writing' is more important now than it was perhaps five years ago." This idea ties in the issue of promoting quality in journalism (explored in Section 2.11 above) with the profitability of being a graduate with a range of advanced skills.

Michael Bromley went further than the rest of the respondents in reply to Question 13 stating creative non-fiction is more important than traditional journalism techniques. He asserted this was due to a shift towards more creative styles in the media, though not necessarily literary ones,

Traditional techniques are no longer attractive to audiences. Writing is no longer the major form of journalism. We need to recognise the visual nature of journalism; the various ways of constructing stories which do not involve writing, and to position ourselves for the future where all these trends will be even more evident. (Bromley, 2006)

Despite this being an interesting idea that explores a changing view of the public towards more creative styles, it does not paint a glowing future for any written genre.

Unlike Bromley, Jolyon Sykes did not foresee the end of print media, instead stating that creative non-fiction was an increasingly viable genre. “This material is an important part of journalism, especially freelance journalism and writing for magazines and newspaper sections” (Sykes, 2005). Respondent 4 was also interested in providing students with more options for their careers. Her response was short, but to the point, “It widens their skill base” (Respondent 4, 2005).

According to Christopher McGillion, the creative non-fiction publishing styles of literary journalism, literary essay, narrative non-fiction and feature articles are taught at his institution, Charles Sturt University. So it was no surprise that he thought the styles were worth teaching. He stated these styles were included in the curriculum to “... extend the techniques of students and in recognition that some will seek/get jobs in non-traditional journalism and publication fields” (McGillion, 2005).

These responses are encouraging for the future of creative non-fiction. More respondents back the industry viability of the genre than were concerned that it is not work-place relevant, and those who were positive about creative non-fiction also tied its relevance into the changing trends in readership. It seems for these respondents, that creative non-fiction is not a risky radical style, but instead it is a mainstream, if not advanced, choice for students.

5.4.14 Creative non-fiction as a form of journalism

While there are many different points of view when it comes to the way creative non-fiction should be taught, how much and to what level of students, the survey revealed that a number of respondents see creative non-fiction as a form of journalism. This is a particularly important discovery as it helps to answer the second research question, ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’

In response to Question 17 (which asked about issues of ethics and the truth) 12 respondents (55 percent) explained their responses as if creative non-fiction and journalism belonged to the same genre of writing. One respondent, Mark Pearson, referred to the genres as both being non-fiction, but more encouragingly for the future of creative non-fiction in journalism education, 10 respondents (46 percent) referred to both genres as journalism.

To include the full quotes in which the respondents refer to creative non-fiction as journalism would be repetitive as they are already included in Section 2.3 above, although they are used in that section to reveal the way the respondents feel about the truth. However, it is worthwhile listing the respondents and revealing the way they referred to the genres.

In the survey, Respondent 2 made a distinction only between journalism and fiction, not one between journalism and creative non-fiction. Respondent 13 (2005), who was not an emphatic supporter of creative non-fiction categorised creative non-fiction as both a “style of journalism” and a “genre of journalism” in response to two questions.

Jolyon Sykes called creative non-fiction a form of journalism, as did Kathryn Bowd and Respondent 22 (2006) who called creative non-fiction, “a difficult form of journalism to pull off well.” Stephen Tanner, Respondent 15 and Ian Richards all used only the word journalism when they referred to both journalism and creative non-fiction. Stephen McIlwaine (2005) referred to the genres in this way, but also stated that creative non-fiction “has a place in the broad spectrum of journalistic writing.”

For his response Matthew Ricketson again asked the researcher to refer to his textbook *Writing Feature Stories*. This shows Ricketson's belief in creative non-fiction as a form of journalism with all the ethical responsibilities inherent in this genre of writing (Ricketson, 2004, p. 232). In response to other questions Ricketson made it clear he used the term 'literary journalism' instead of creative non-fiction, although he saw them as the same genre of writing. These words from his text book and his response to Question 13 in which he called creative non-fiction a journalistic form, show he saw this genre of writing (no matter what it is called) as a form of journalism.

Michael Meadows referred to creative non-fiction as journalism in response to Question 14 when he explained why a specific creative non-fiction subject would be worthwhile. What is particularly worth noting here is that in his response Meadows (2005) used the phrase "other journalism offerings" indicating his belief that creative non-fiction was a journalism subject.

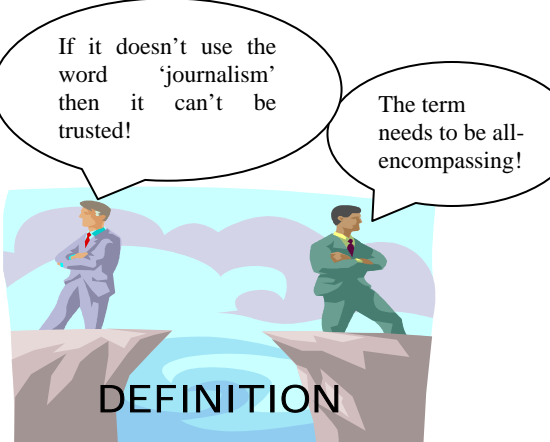


The respondents listed above disagreed on many of the issues surrounding creative non-fiction and the differences between it and traditional journalism. For example, Meadows and McIlwaine ranked creative non-fiction and traditional journalism as equally important while Sykes gave creative non-fiction a rank of three out of 10 and Bowd gave the genre a rank of two. Also, while Pearson lauded the new opportunities for journalism graduates in the ever-growing world of creative non-fiction, Richards stated there were few employment opportunities for students versed in the genre. Despite these enormous differences, it is interesting that they see creative non-fiction as a form of journalism (even if they're not all sure it is as important a form as hard news). It is also worth noting that none of these respondents stated that creative non-fiction should be taught by another department (an issue explored in Section 6.4.9 above) reinforcing their position on the close relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism.

Exactly what the nature of this relationship is — in fact the answer to the research question ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’ — is discussed in the following chapter.





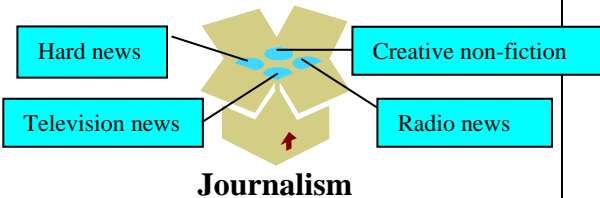
6.5 Key Findings

A number of key findings are suggested by this stage of the research. These findings are explained in Table 6.18 below. The table features three columns. The first outlines the key findings which have been discussed in Section 4 above. The second asks a series of questions which arise from the key findings. The third column contains pictorial representations of the findings and issues which arise from them. Pictorial representations are traditionally used to illustrate simple ideas or objects, such as a drawing of a human heart to accompany a text about cardiology. However, these representations are also useful to summarise key ideas and the relationships between them. These representations often incorporate the use of metaphors for ideas or use arrows or boxes to show relationships ("Pictorial representation", 2000). The implications of the key findings and how they answer the research question, ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’ are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

TABLE 6.18

FINDINGS	ISSUES ARISING	REPRESENTATION
<p>The term ‘creative non-fiction’ is accepted by the majority of the heads of journalism departments.</p>	<p>Why does the journalism community resist using a term that does not include the word ‘journalism’ when ‘creative non-fiction’ incorporates a wide range of styles and techniques?</p>	
<p>When it comes to ethics and the truth there should be no difference between the way journalism and creative non-fiction should be taught or practiced.</p>	<p>Why is there is still suspicion of creative non-fiction?</p>	
<p>Journalism students are perceived by some academics as incapable of meeting the challenges of creative non-fiction.</p>	<p>Are journalism students less capable than other students (such as creative writing or film and television) who are asked to write different genres?</p>	

<p>There are restrictions on time in universities which make the addition of styles and techniques difficult.</p>	<p>Could creative non-fiction boost journalism budgets or be incorporated into other offerings like feature writing?</p>	
<p>Some academics stated creative non-fiction should not be a core class. Instead it should be offered as an elective or as an advanced or postgraduate offering</p>	<p>If creative non-fiction has a place in journalism education, where is it?</p>	
<p>It is believed by some academics that creative non-fiction should be offered by creative writing or English departments.</p>	<p>Who is better equipped to teach creative non-fiction? Creative writing departments (who specialise in the styles of fiction writers) or journalism departments (who specialise in non-fiction)?</p>	

Some academics stated universities should extend and challenge students. This will help to provide innovators for the industry.	Where is the balance between providing core skills to journalism students and fostering innovation?	
Industry has little need for creative non-fiction.	Should students learn techniques and styles if they are not immediately useful in the workplace?	<div> <div>  <p>JOURNALISM GRADUATE</p> </div> <div>  <p>NEWSPAPER EDITOR</p> </div> </div>
Industry has an increasing need for creative non-fiction.	Do more skills for students mean a wider range of job opportunities?	<div> <p>I have examples of hard news, traditional and literary features, and biographical pieces I published in the university paper and magazine.</p>  <div> <p>I can show you all the hard news stories I wrote for the university paper.</p> <p>What range of skills do you have?</p> </div> </div>
Many respondents stated creative non-fiction is a form of journalism.	If the genre is a form of journalism, why don't journalism departments teach it?	

The pictures used in this table were developed from images from Microsoft Clip Art.

CHAPTER 7

The place of creative non-fiction in journalism education

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapters 5 and 6 was to answer this study's second research question:

‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’

It was decided both qualitative and quantitative approaches were necessary to formulate an answer. Chapter 5 sought to answer this question through the qualitative approach of elite interviews. Interviews were conducted with Australian writers who had a range of experience in both journalism and creative non-fiction. Chapter 6 went further in answering the question through a census of Australian tertiary journalism programs. This census involved both quantitative and qualitative elements.

The purpose of the second research question was to determine whether or not creative non-fiction could enrich the education experience of tertiary journalism students and by doing so enhance their opportunities after graduation. This determination was possible through finding the place of creative non-fiction in journalism education and bringing together the arguments for and against this place made in the literature and by interviewees and survey respondents.

This stage of the research revealed that journalism students would benefit from learning creative non-fiction techniques and publication styles, as students and in their future careers. This finding was made possible through the number of key elements presented through the interviews and the census. These elements were the relationship between journalism and creative non-fiction, the purpose of university journalism education and creative non-fiction’s relevance to industry.

7.2 Relationship between journalism and creative non-fiction

One of the most important findings stemming from the elite interviews and the census was that journalism and creative non-fiction are closely related. In fact, their relationship is so close they can be seen as different parts of the same genre of writing.

The research showed while there were clear differences between creative non-fiction and journalism, there were more similarities than the Stage One elite interviews (with creative non-fiction elites, detailed in Chapter 4) or the literature suggested. The second stage of the study indicated there were no differences in the way creative non-fiction writers and journalists approach their audience or their research. There were also other key topics which revealed a close relationship. These were the influence of editors, deadlines, truth, structure and the idea that creative non-fiction may be a form of journalism.

The elites explained no matter what genre of writing or what publication style they write, they must produce work readers find both interesting and comprehensible. This idea of ensuring work is interesting, despite the style of writing, was reinforced in the survey. Respondents like Stephen Tanner and Michael Meadows explained journalism should be entertaining for readers; that they should be encouraged to read by providing them with stories they can enjoy and that engage their emotions.

When it came to research, the elites said their approach was the same no matter what type of non-fiction they engaged in. They explained that vigilance and attention to detail were important across all genres and that experience in one aided work in another. The value of research in all non-fiction was supported in the literature. Certainly a range of journalism styles (such as investigative reporting) and forms of creative non-fiction (such as literary journalism) are known for their dedication to research (Ricketson, 2004; Tanner, 2002).

The influence of editors was also an issue which suggested journalism and creative non-fiction have much in common. While the elites admitted newspaper editors tended

to be heavier handed than book editors, they stipulated it was in fact the power and influence of the writer that made all the difference. It seems the more popular you become with readers, the less likely editors are to change your work; no matter what genre you write in.

Surprisingly, the topic of deadlines provided similar responses among the elites to the discussion of editors. While short deadlines are more common in hard news, there are also time constraints on creative non-fiction. Rather than this topic being divided in terms of genre (journalism versus creative non-fiction), differences appeared between publication styles. A book-length biography has a vastly different deadline to a magazine article on breast cancer for *Woman's Day*, which has a different deadline to an investigative feature for *The Bulletin* magazine, which has a different deadline to a story for a newspaper front page on an overnight fire, which has a different deadline to a literary essay on migrants, and so on.

The literature also showed that deadlines do not impact on the use of creative non-fiction techniques. Consistently, the winners of the Poynter Institute's best newspaper writing awards for deadline writing are narrative-based pieces of creative non-fiction (Woods, 2003). For example, the 2002 winner of the individual deadline news reporting award, N.R. Kleinfield, wrote his story for the *New York Times* about the September 11 terrorist attacks in time for it to be published in the September 12 edition. Despite the deadline, Kleinfield managed to write a piece of creative non-fiction for the front page. The story's inclusion in the genre is evident in just the first few sentences through Kleinfield's use of vivid description and a clear point of view.

It kept getting worse.

The horror arrived in episodic bursts of chilling disbelief, signified by trembling floors, sharp eruptions, cracked windows. There was the actual unfathomable realisation of a gaping, flaming hole in the first one of the tall towers, and then the same thing all over again, in its twin. There was the merciless sight of bodies helplessly tumbling out, some of them in flames. (Kleinfield, 2001, p. 1)

As this story shows, the front page is not just a place for ‘news voice’, but instead it can include the writer’s point of view (even if the pronoun ‘I’ is never used). An infusion of a journalist’s voice or their views on an issue may not be as common in the first few pages of a newspaper as it is the features section, lifestyle lift-out, or in columns, but it nevertheless is used – particularly in a long running or ‘disaster’ story.

Not much has changed in the use of creative non-fiction in the winning entries since Kleinfield’s 9/11 piece. Poynter’s winner of deadline reporting in 2005 was Dexter Filkins. He also wrote creative non-fiction pieces, filled with character development, dialogue and action-oriented scenes:

FALLUJA, Iraq, Nov. 8 -- The two marines were pinned down on a roof on Monday, pressing themselves against a low, crumbling wall as insurgents fired rocket-propelled grenades at them from a building near the middle of town...

Commanders called in artillery fire on the building where the grenades were emerging, their tails spitting and glowing like sparklers across the sky. But the artillery only flattened the building next door to the one occupied by the insurgents.

“This is crazy,” one of the marines said. “Yeah,” his buddy said, “and we’ve only taken one house.” (Filkins, 2004)

The use of creative non-fiction in front page deadline reporting again shows how interchangeable the genre can be with traditional hard news journalism and how closely the two genres are related.

One of the clearest similarities between journalism and creative non-fiction revealed by the elites and the survey was the way the two genres dealt with the truth. When a review of the literature was conducted, it was revealed that creative non-fiction was seen by some as a genre likely to bend the facts. However, the research conducted as part of this study showed this was far from the truth (see Section 5.1.2c of Chapter 5). Through responses to this study’s survey it became clear that journalism academics have strong ideas about truthfulness in any genre purporting to be non-fiction. In the survey,

academics acknowledged the close ties creative non-fiction had with journalism by explaining that as the genres were so intimately related they must treat the truth in the same way.

These survey responses revealed the ideas of journalism teachers, not all of whom had published works of both journalism and creative non-fiction. Therefore, their ideas may be seen as an ideal, rather than what actually occurs in practice in the creative non-fiction writing community. However, the statements of the creative non-fiction/journalism elites in their interviews backed up the survey respondents' statements about the way the genres remain faithful to the truth.

The elites in this second stage of the research stated the truth should not be altered in creative non-fiction, or journalism, and that all writers have a responsibility to their readers. That is not to say the elites did not make stipulations on these ideas – for example Sarah MacDonald stated there was more room for error in some styles of creative non-fiction, such as memoir, where memory can be murky. However, in these cases she also stated the reader should be informed of the problems inherent in these publication styles (she did this through admitting to a terrible memory in her travel memoir *Holy Cow*) (MacDonald, 2005, p. 4). Again it appears some dichotomy can exist between publication styles – memoir and newspaper features for example – but there is no real difference between the philosophies of creative non-fiction and journalism when it comes to the truth.

One of the greatest differences between traditional hard news journalism and creative non-fiction identified in the literature and in the Stage One elite interviews, was the way the two genres treat structure. Hard news is known for its inverted pyramid, four Ws and H approach, whereas creative non-fiction utilises structures that are based on the theme and tone of the story, and employs creative techniques such as vivid description (Section 5.2 in Chapter 4 for more information on this issue). The elite interviews in this second stage of the study, however, saw some crossover between the genres even in this area.

The elites discussed the need for all writing to be interesting, for it to engage readers – whether it is a childhood memoir or a piece of political reporting.

The success of using creative non-fiction in the place of the inverted pyramid in the United States is evidenced by the Poynter awards discussed above and through the globally used wire service the Associated Press (AP). The wide reach of the service is clear, with more than a billion people every day reading, hearing or seeing AP news (The Associated Press, 2006). In 2005 the AP announced a new service for its subscribers – an optional lead. While, in the past, subscribers were offered only what was called a “straight” lead (a traditional 4 Ws and H introductory sentence or two) to each story, they can now choose to use a lead which presents the news in a more creative way. The AP put out an advisory which explained the new service:

The concept is simple: On major spot stories — especially when events happen early in the day — we will provide you with two versions to choose between. One will be the traditional ‘straight lead’ that leads with the main facts of what took place. The other will be the optional, an alternative approach that attempts to draw in the reader through imagery, narrative devices, perspective or other creative means. (Silverman, 2005)

In other words, the AP now offers a small piece of creative non-fiction to their subscriber newspapers. The introduction of this option demonstrates the adaptability of creative non-fiction techniques and how closely related they are to traditional journalism techniques – so close that they can be woven together in the same story

Despite the range of techniques and attitudes that link journalism and creative non-fiction, there was no greater proof of the closeness of the relationship between the genres than in the census when over half the respondents referred to them as belonging to the same genre of writing. Perhaps more telling is that 10 of the 22 respondents referred to creative non-fiction as a form of journalism.

The survey was the first instance that creative non-fiction had been literally described as a form or style of journalism. Until the results of the survey were reviewed, this idea

had barely been considered. After all, the literature and the Stage One elites had set up the two genres as almost at philosophical odds. This is perhaps because in the face of some vehement criticism of creative non-fiction, its supporters (like the elites) chose to fight back with barbs of their own (calling traditional journalism boring and out-dated) rather than revealing the close relationship the genres share.

However, the suggestion that creative non-fiction is a form of journalism should have come as no surprise. The elites in Stage Two had alluded numerous times to how the genres worked together to improve their writing and some even stated that there was almost no difference in the way they approached the genres. While creative non-fiction is not a form of journalism, but a genre in its own right, this study has shown that it is inexorably linked to journalism.

7.3 Purpose of university journalism education

There has long been a discussion about the quality of journalism – whether it is a discussion of how newspapers are losing their ability to be unbiased in a world where global media conglomerates (and the opinions of their owners) run the show – or more pertaining to this study – the quality of writing produced in today’s news media (Giles, 2002; Green, 2003). Quality was an issue raised in this stage’s elite interviews, particularly by the two most senior elites – Hugh Lunn and Helen Garner. Garner (2005, p. 3) suggested having journalism students learn creative non-fiction could be the answer to what she called the “dull, dull, dull” writing produced by journalism students and professionals.

In an ABC Radio National interview (which also included journalism educator Matthew Ricketson and journalist Mark Mordue) journalist and author, Margaret Simons raised the issue of quality in today’s media. She thought literary journalism (a style of creative non-fiction) could be the way for newspapers to encourage readership (an idea the AP also had – as described in Section Two above). Although it must be said that Simons is not happy with the term ‘literary journalism’ — or any other terminology

suggestion, including creative non-fiction — that describes a style of writing which marries the techniques of the fiction writer with the hard facts of non-fiction.

The problem is that many of the forms of daily journalism at the moment have come to enshrine poor writing, and I think here we get tangled up in this whole very current notion of bias, objectivity and subjectivity... And so we have daily news journalism written in a voice which is apparently objective in the sense that the reporter has rung up both sides (it's rarely acknowledged there might be more than two) written them up at equal space without undue emphasis on either side, and put it in the paper. It's redundant really, you can skip it. You probably already do. I suspect it's one of the reasons newspaper circulations are falling and current affairs programs ratings are also falling. (May, 2005)

In response to the survey, Matthew Ricketson raised the role of universities in encouraging new thought and as places for innovation and experimentation. This idea has perhaps been lost in the plethora of discussions about journalism education. Many of the debates are centred on the theory versus practice issue, rather than looking at what the future of journalism could or should be and moulding that future through allowing students to experiment.

In 2002, Brent Cunningham, the managing editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, embarked on a search for the perfect j-school. As part of that search, he spoke to New York University's Mitchell Stephens. Stephens had created an undergraduate honours class called 'Rethinking journalism' in which, according to the syllabus, "students will consider some of the limitations of contemporary journalism... and will experiment with stories — for print, video and the Web — designed to overcome some of those limitations" (Cunningham, 2002, p. 7).

Cunningham visited one of the classes, and saw students read the first couple of paragraphs of a story in *The New York Times* and then discuss the voice, or lack of it, in the story. Then they read snippets of writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Tom Paine and

Ernie Pyle and discussed how the *Times* article could be rewritten with a different voice, and whether that was something they wanted from a daily newspaper. Later Stephens told Cunningham,

I'm not sure the answer to making journalism education more intellectual, or whatever, is just to add a bunch of courses in philosophy and history. It's to have them read people like Virginia Woolf and see what they can tell us about what we do today. We have a responsibility to experiment with ways to do it better. (Cunningham, 2002, p. 7)

Cunningham went on to voice his observations about some of the criticism of journalism education.

Beyond the trade-school bit, the other knock on journalism schools has been that, unlike law and business schools, they are not think-tanks for the profession, places that produce useful new ideas and help working journalists solve their problems. (Cunningham, 2002, p. 7)

Mitchell Stephens articulated his thoughts on journalism education through what he called the 13 principles for practical journalism education. In these principles, Stephens succinctly made a case for many of the changes creative non-fiction experts and supporters (including those included in the two stages of elite interviews conducted in this study) put forward (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006).

In his final principle Stephens asked and answered a number of important questions about the importance of new and different thinking,

Would there be jobs for students who have been encouraged to experiment? Don't underestimate the hunger in the profession for fresh ideas... Might the adoption of such principles help move journalism education from the rear guard of the profession, merely defending old standards, to the avant garde, the place where law schools and medical schools have managed to position themselves? I hope so. (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 153)

It is also important to provide students with a place to try new things in a university setting because the workplace is not always a safe environment for experimentation. This point was made by Australian author and journalist Mark Mordue who has published in a range of publications including *Rolling Stone*, *HQ*, *Vogue*, *The Australian*, *GQ* and *The Bulletin*. Mordue stated he wrote creative non-fiction early in his career (in his 20s) in the music press, which, unlike many streams of the media, allowed for the mistakes any young writer will make when attempting to, as he stated, “raise reporting and reviewing and interviewing up to the level of literature, or damn well near it” (May, 2005). He explained:

Fortunately, what the underground rock’n’roll press provided for me, was a kind of training ground and experimental school of hard knocks where you could fail and live to write another day. A badly written album review wasn’t going to kill anybody. Hopefully though, you wrote more good than bad stories, and got more consistently effective along the way, continuing to experiment and innovate; at the same time you refined the disciplines of accuracy, precision, focus, control, and... the truth. (May, 2005)

Not all aspiring journalists have the chance (or interest) to work for these kinds of publications. What universities can do is provide the same sort of (relatively) safe environment where aspiring journalists can take risks and make mistakes without the fear of destroying their careers.

It is impossible to expect the next generation of journalists to improve on the quality of our current professional crop if they are not provided with examples of great writing and asked to emulate them. How can these young journalists ever hope to produce great stories and one day be the editors who commission this sort of work, if they do not understand what it is? It can be argued that, like creative writing departments which ask their students to read and emulate the great and the popular, journalism academics should task their students with more just than getting down the basics.

Mitchell Stephens’ third principle for practical journalism education spoke to the idea discussed above – that students need to do more than look at day to day journalism. For

inspiration, Stephens suggested journalism courses should be places where students can experiment with different styles, from different eras and countries. Not just the styles journalists have insisted upon in the last half of the 20th century. Stephens also asked journalism courses to encourage students to create their own styles and approaches. He then made a valid and important point about the state of journalism and its future,

Journalism courses should not just prepare students for the profession by imitating the profession. Is the quality of journalism currently so high that our only responsibility is to preserve it by replicating it? Journalism courses should, instead, be places where new ideas, ideas that might improve the quality of journalism, are born and tested. (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 151)

Some academics (evidenced in this study by the four survey respondents who questioned journalism students' capabilities) believe there is little point in asking students to work towards producing works in a genre of writing like creative non-fiction. According to this school of thought, journalism students are simply not up to the task. As one respondent wrote,

Most students have considerable difficulty in mastering traditional news writing techniques. Adding creative non-fiction techniques is generally confusing for many students, and reduces their ability to master traditional techniques. (Richards, 2005, p. 3)

While there are students in every class, of every degree, who would sooner be watching television than learning even the basics of a course, let alone pushing themselves, they should not be allowed to stop the ever-increasing number of passionate students from having new opportunities presented to them.

Not everyone doubts journalism students' capabilities, in fact the majority of survey respondents, and all the elites interviewed in this stage of the study, believed creative non-fiction was not only within students' grasp, but important for their education. Stephens took faith in students' abilities to the next level with his second principle for journalism education. He not only inferred that journalism students were a capable

group, but stated: “Journalism education has been too basic; it has been insufficiently intellectually challenging.” In his explanation of this principle, Stephens stated,

Along with practicing the inverted pyramid and anecdotal leads, all the students in the class might be asked to have a go at a first-person story, an essay and a vignette. Along with experiencing the power of Olympian objectivity, the students might be given an occasion to deploy some analysis or opinion. (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 150)

Here Stephens was asking for students to be exposed to the techniques and styles of creative non-fiction, and clearly believed in their ability to cope with its demands. He was not afraid that by learning something new or challenging, students would forget how to use the inverted pyramid or be confused about whether one technique or another was appropriate. As he stated in his thirteenth principle, “I believe it is a mistake to underestimate [journalism students]” (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 153). He also tried to reassure academics nervous of changes to journalism education, “Could instructors handle the challenges of teaching outside of rigid forms and familiar routines? Let’s not underestimate ourselves” (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 153).

There is an even greater motivation for journalism students to pursue high quality in their work than just the belief that many academics (such as Stephens and the respondents who supported creative non-fiction) have in them. Today there are economic motivators for paying attention in class and caring about assignments. Each year in Australia it becomes more difficult to afford a degree, as the price of tertiary education increases. Whether a student chooses to go with the government contribution/loan scheme HECS or pay full fees (if they were unable to gain a HECS place in university or they chose to go to a private university) the price of a degree is soaring. Just a small piece of evidence of this is an estimation that one in three people who incur HECS debts today will die before they can pay them off. In 1997 HECS fees were increased by between 35 and 125 percent. In 2005 they were increased by a further 25 percent (Ellis, 2006).

Full fee-paying students are not faring any better. According to the Australian Federal Department of Education, Science and Training, in 2005/6 fee paying students

will incur debts of \$579 million, and in 2009/10 they will be expected to have borrowed \$825 million a year to pay for degrees costing up to \$200,000 (Doherty, 2005). With figures like this, it must be considered that students are taking their education a little more seriously than those in years before them who could afford to coast through courses because there was no real financial burden if they swapped to another degree, or bumped up their grades with another subject or two later on.

Journalism students deserve the best education that can be offered to them within the constraints of budgets and time. In a perfect world, all universities would have fully functioning television and radio studios, student-driven magazine and daily newspapers, and unfettered access to the industry. It is not a perfect world. As demonstrated by this study's survey, journalism departments face shortages of staff, time and money – all while trying to provide students with enough knowledge to face the challenges of their first jobs in journalism (see Chapter 6, Section 4.5). Despite these considerable pressures, it is vital to consider the importance of providing a curriculum that offers more than subjects in the basics of print, broadcast and new media. Students should also have access to the advanced techniques and publication styles offered by creative non-fiction; a genre that can take students beyond the basics and into the future.

7.4 Industry relevance

One of the major criticisms of creative non-fiction to emerge from the survey was that it was irrelevant in industry and would be virtually useless to journalism graduates (see Chapter 6, Section 4.12). In many modern university degrees, journalism students can opt to take electives in a range of humanities subjects — such as philosophy and sociology — which are not immediately relevant in the day to day workings of a newspaper. However, these subjects are valuable in the well-rounded education of any university student and provide a useful base of knowledge for any journalist.

G. Stuart Adam, the journalism scholarship fellow at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, and professor of journalism at Carleton University, Ottawa, stated two of the axes of the ideal university program in journalism were: “(3) general studies in arts and

sciences; and (4) specialisation in a single companion subject such as politics, economics, law, science, or fine arts and culture” (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 153). His words reveal the importance of studying subjects which are not immediately practical in the newsroom, but provide a foundation of knowledge vital for any journalist. A foundation that, according to Michael Schudson from the University of San Diego, is industry relevant:

Editors I’ve talked to, at least at better publications, are really looking for someone with curiosity, with some broad base of general knowledge. Journalists are thrown into all kinds of things in which they have to be very quick studies. If they have some broad base in the wide variety of humanities, social sciences and sciences, they’ll do better. (Radio National, 2002)

In Australia similar arguments have been made. In 2001, the University of Queensland reported it had instituted classes for journalism students which were intended to make them ‘generalists’. The idea behind these classes was that those graduates with a wide base of general knowledge would be best equipped for their careers (McIlwaine, Tanner, & Green, 2001).

Elites in this stage of the study agreed on the importance of providing students with a wide base of knowledge. Sarah MacDonald said while she sometimes wished she had studied journalism rather than psychology at university, there are other subjects that are perhaps more important for a budding reporter, “I think you need to do politics and governance and things like that, possibly English” (MacDonald, 2005, p. 4).

So, if creative non-fiction was only one of these humanities subjects that provided journalists with a broad range of knowledge to draw from in their work, then perhaps it would already be industry relevant and worthwhile adding to tertiary journalism education. However, creative non-fiction provides more than intellectual stimulation for students; it provides them with skills and opportunities which are immediately relevant to any young journalist.

As shown in the survey, there are many arguments for the relevance of creative non-fiction in a journalist's career (see Chapter 6, Section 4.13). Those respondents who saw the value in creative non-fiction in industry did so in response to what they stated were the changing needs of the workplace. As Matthew Ricketson said, "... the amount of journalism that is written in a form other than the inverted pyramid is growing, and has been for several years" (Ricketson, 2005). Michael Meadows also made a statement reflective of other respondents' views. "Readers and editors... are wanting good stories, not formulaic inverted pyramid pieces... so teaching 'good writing' is more important now than it was perhaps five years ago" (Meadows, 2005, p. 3).

Creative non-fiction is also important as a response to the fall in newspaper readership. Mark Kramer, writer in residence at the Nieman Foundation and director of the Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism at Harvard, made this point at the 2005 Nieman conference. He stated, "Narrative is a business solution for newspapers," citing research which showed that the 840 to 850 US newspapers that regularly use narrative journalism (a style of creative non-fiction) have good circulation figures (Kramer, 2005b).

The AP's decision to include an optional lead, discussed in Section 2 as an example of the crossover between daily traditional journalism and creative non-fiction, is also worth discussing here. The introduction of this service shows how creative non-fiction is becoming increasingly important to the survival of newspapers.

The AP stated the optional lead was introduced in response to demand from newspapers and will only be available to them. In the face of stronger than ever competition with television, radio, online news and even blogging (which attracts the youth audience), the managing editor of the AP, Mike Silverman, said the optional lead would help newspapers "...compete for eyes" (Smerd, 2005, p. 10). Newspaper editors reported to the AP that part of their problem in attracting readership was that by the time people picked up a newspaper, they had already been exposed to the major news of the day through other, more immediate, sources. Silverman stated,

This initiative comes in response to what we've been hearing from many editors: that you need to be able to offer your readers something fresh so they will want to pick up the newspaper and read a story, even though the facts have been splashed all over the Web and widely broadcast. (Silverman, 2005)

Apparently the idea came from sports writing, which had for years assumed readers knew who had won and wanted something more from their news (Seelye, 2005).

Silverman's words reinforce the comments from some of the respondents to this study's survey who stated that creative non-fiction was in greater demand. His statements also counter the arguments of other respondents who stated that the industry is not interested in the genre. Silverman's words are particularly representative of the views of one survey respondent, Stephen Tanner (2005) who stated: "...creative non-fiction techniques will be important if future generations of journalists, particularly those working in the print media, hope to compete with their electronic counterparts."

According to *The New York Sun*, press analysts said the AP development was a small, positive step for the wire service and its member newspapers. The chairman of the journalism department at New York University, Jay Rosen, said: "The notion that the audience is just waiting around to be informed doesn't exist anymore" (Smerd, 2005).

The AP is not alone in realising how technological changes have affected the way people look for their news. Tom French, staff writer at the *St. Petersburg Times* for 25 years and a teacher of creative non-fiction at Goucher College, spoke about the need for change in newspapers. He stated that at the *Times*, "We've been slow to face that TV and the internet do a better job of covering the breaking news quickly and efficiently" (French, Lyall, & Nissen, 2005). In response to this realisation, French and his team covered the Terri Schiavo right to life case with stories written using the techniques of creative non-fiction (French, Lyall, & Nissen, 2005). Sarah Lyall, *The New York Times* London correspondent has also faced problems of currency: "By the time I write a story that is important enough to be included in *The New York Times*, its been on TV, the internet and radio all day" (French, Lyall, & Nissen, 2005). Like French, Lyall's response

to this problem was to write pieces of creative non-fiction, using techniques like narrative and writing in scenes (French, Lyall, & Nissen, 2005).

The AP has introduced another innovation to combat the fall in readership in the lucrative under 35 age bracket. In 2005, the AP joined what was described in the *American Journalism Review* as “the stampede to lasso elusive young readers,” launching ‘asap’ (pronounced a-s-a-p) (Smolkin, 2006, p. 19). Asap’s stories are overwhelmingly creative non-fiction. Examples include first person accounts of hunting for Bigfoot, Iranians’ view of US international relations and a search to create that McDonald’s taste at home (see <http://www.ap.org/asap/demo.html> for more stories).

Recent changes in the United States and the addition to the news stands of more literary non-fiction magazines, like *The Monthly*, in Australia show the increase in use of creative non-fiction. The healthy magazine industry in Australia also shows jobs in creative non-fiction are available. According to the Magazine Publishers of Australia (MPA) Australians are among the world’s most passionate magazine buyers. In 2005, on average, every Australian bought 13.6 Audit Bureau of Circulations audited magazines. That totals 226 million magazines – and this figure does not include non-audited consumer titles. The MPA reported Australians spent an estimated \$1.06 billion on magazines in 2005, this was 2.5 percent increase on 2004 figures ("Circulation", 2005).

The top selling magazines of 2005 did not only represent those which feature celebrity gossip and new weight loss techniques. In the MPA’s top 100 national consumer newsstand magazines (ranked by circulation) from July to December 2005 there were a range of magazines which regularly publish creative non-fiction. These publications represent real job opportunities in this genre (whether they are in freelance or staff positions). Titles on the list, to name a few, include number 21 - *Marie Claire* (circulation 110,363); number 50 - *The Bulletin* (circulation 60,625); and number 56 - *Vogue Australia* (circulation 56,293) ("Top 100 magazine circulation", 2005).

It is not only magazines which are big sellers of creative non-fiction, and therefore significant employers of those with skills in the genre. There is also opportunity for journalism graduates schooled in creative non-fiction to find work and money in the world of book publishing. As elite interviewee Nikki Gemmell (2005, p. 4) said: “I think there is an even bigger market for creative non-fiction than fiction now, it certainly seems to be the buzz in the publishing world.” Gemmell’s speculation appears to be correct. In the United States, non-fiction is outselling fiction by around 100 million books a year. Michael Coffey, executive managing editor of *Publishers Weekly* stated: “Fiction seems to have lost a lot of authority in the culture. People now look more toward true stories as something that justifies the expense of their time” (Kloberdanz, Lofaro, Sachs, & Maag, 2006, p. 52).

The non-fiction boom is not just in overseas markets. As explained in the Introduction (Chapter 1, Section 5), the popularity of non-fiction books in Australia is increasing, with the number of books sold continuing to increase each year. In fact non-fiction sells double the number of fiction titles. It is also worth noting that the number of Australian published non-fiction books is increasing while sales of Australian fiction continue to decline.

Yet, how many of these non-fiction books are not just the ever-popular cookbooks, relationship advice and how-to’s? Of a search of the top 150 books across three categories (top 50 hard cover, top 50 trade paperback and top 50 mass market paper back) sold in Australia in 2004 there were 65 non-fiction books. Of the 65, 28 books were classed by the researcher as creative non-fiction. Examples include *Kokoda* by Peter Fitzsimons, *Joe Cinque’s Consolation* by Helen Garner and *Shark Net* by Robert Drewe. These figures show that creative non-fiction (at least in this instance) represents nearly half (43 percent) of the very lucrative non-fiction market. As New Journalism founder Tom Wolfe said at the 2005 Neiman Narrative Conference: “The publishers are crying out for these books [creative non-fiction] because this form is never going to be out of style” (Wolfe, 2005).

As respondents to the survey pointed out, creative non-fiction is an advanced genre and the chances are that no journalism student will sell an article to *Vogue* or *The Bulletin*, or publish a book in their first few years in the workforce. This does not mean they will not however (today or one day in the future), nor does it mean that they will not have the opportunity to use the techniques to enliven their day to day work if they are newspaper reporters.

What creative non-fiction gives to graduates, as Ricketson pointed out in his survey responses, is a chance to understand what great writing is. It also provides some hope to graduates that even though they may spend their days re-writing press releases for their local newspaper, in the future there is a place and a way to showcase their talent and truly enjoy writing and reporting. Gifted students can become bored if they are not challenged, and the same goes for journalists. In his elite interview, Ed Southorn (2005, p. 1) admitted to this problem explaining that creative non-fiction is what enables him to continue to be a journalist.

Southorn works at a regional daily and stated that papers like this are facing a decline in readership because they are not offering the audience a reasonable quality of writing or information. Creative non-fiction, used even in small amounts – such as the creative leads provided by the AP – could be an answer to this quality problem. This would also answer the question asked by Respondent Two (2005) in his survey, “Where are the regional jobs for creative non-fiction?”

As was suggested in Section 3 above, universities should be places where students are challenged and provided with room to experiment and invent ways to take journalism to a new, better future. There seems to be a consensus among the elites that many publication styles of creative non-fiction, and certainly all of its techniques, produce high quality work. It follows from this idea that if journalism students are versed in these styles and techniques, they will take them through into their careers. This point is supported by findings presented by University of Queensland student Vivienne Wynter in her honours thesis. As part of her study into literary journalism in Australia she interviewed a range

of newspaper editors, literary journalists and academics. Wynter (2004, p. 44) found that the majority of respondents believed that ignorance of literary journalism did or ‘maybe’ played a role in limiting the use of the style in the mainstream media.

Educating journalism students in creative non-fiction will not immediately change the face of journalism, or of newspapers. However, as these journalists continue in their careers, gaining more power and influence as writers and editors, they can change the way stories are written. They can also change the perception among some journalists that the use of creative non-fiction techniques is, as Ricketson stated in his interview with Wynter, “wanky” (Wynter, 2004, p. 47). This perception is also evident in the academy. In response to the survey conducted as part of this research, two respondents said much of creative non-fiction was “self-indulgent” (Respondent 15, 2005) and “often pretentious” (Lamble, 2005). With this new generation of creative non-fiction practicing journalists at the helm of newspapers and magazines, not only would the use of creative non-fiction techniques increase, but so too would the need for the genre to be taught to following generations of journalism students.

This is all theorising, but it does follow a logical path. From the end of the American civil war the inverted pyramid four Ws and H approach flourished (Mindich, 1993, p. 4). Academics (and those who instruct cadets) saw this and instilled the importance of this style in journalism students, so this style continued to be what was generally written in newspapers. Every day academics saw what was in newspapers and this validated what they taught. So the cycle continued, despite the demise of the telegraph and the arrival of more immediate media like radio, television and now the internet. As the cycle continues, readers continue to switch to other media. If anything is to change, it needs to begin from the ground up. At the ground floor are journalism students.

7.5 Finding creative non-fiction’s place in journalism education

The elites in this second stage of the study were asked if they thought it was worthwhile for journalism students to study creative non-fiction. The answer was a collective and resounding ‘yes’. The census of journalism departments returned similar results, with 21

out of 22 respondents stating that the genre's publication styles were worth teaching and 20 stating creative non-fiction techniques were worthwhile for students to learn. The discussion above has revealed that creative non-fiction is closely related to journalism and is career-relevant for students.

This study has shown there is support for creative non-fiction among academics, but its purpose was to reveal the exact place the genre has in tertiary journalism education. That place has been determined through suggestions made by the elites and survey respondents. A short course in creative non-fiction held by the researcher also provided some points of interest. The discussion of creative non-fiction in journalism education takes three parts. The first explains which students should study creative non-fiction, the second describes where it fits into the chronology of a degree, and the third focuses on the pedagogical concerns inherent in introducing such a genre into journalism education.

7.5.1 Which journalism students should study creative non-fiction

This study has focused on print media. This choice was made after a review of the literature and the views of creative non-fiction elites. This review led to this study's definition of creative non-fiction which stated that the genre was restricted to print (see Chapter 4, Section 6.3 for more details on this decision). Despite this restriction, it was acknowledged that many broadcast media, while not actually styles of creative non-fiction, do utilise the genre's techniques (such as character development, narrative structure and point of view).

The reasons why students focusing on careers in print should study creative non-fiction have been given numerous times in this study; in the literature, by the elites in both stages of this study, and in the survey. The reasons why all journalism students (such as those focused on broadcast) should study the genre have not been made as clear.

There was some discussion of creative non-fiction techniques being used in broadcast media in the Stage One elite interviews. Rebecca Skloot (2004, p. 2) stated that creative non-fiction could be found on radio, "I've absolutely heard great creative non-fiction

radio stories. National Public Radio, some of their ‘All things considered’ shows”. Donna Lee Brien (2004, p. 2) included a wider range of media, “My definition of creative non-fiction also uses film makers... including some documentary makers, radio.”

Sarah MacDonald (2005, p. 1), in the Stage Two elite interviews, also acknowledged the use of creative non-fiction techniques in Australian radio: “[The genre is used on] the *Morning Show*, which I guess is a radio form of creative non-fiction, in that we tell stories about our lives on air and weave them into the interviews we were doing.” The use of the genre’s techniques – such as narrative, character and dialogue – is also evident on television with shows like the ABC’s *Australian Story* and Channel 9’s special interview with the miners rescued in Beaconsfield.

There are also opportunities for creative non-fiction on the web. As mentioned in Chapter 4, while blogging is not considered a style of creative non-fiction, there is a range of places on the internet where the genre flourishes. There are online creative non-fiction journals such as *Brevity* (<http://www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity/>) and online news sites and magazines such as the Australian production *New Matilda* (<http://www.newmatilda.com>) which regularly features stories which fall under the banner of creative non-fiction. As the internet (and dissatisfaction with mainstream media) grows, so should the number of prospects for publishing creative non-fiction.

It is clear creative non-fiction techniques are utilised in television and radio news and current affairs, and on the internet. With this in mind it is evident that all students should have the chance to broaden their horizons through creative non-fiction; to see what they need to do to produce high quality work and what opportunities may be available to them beyond the first few years of their careers.

7.5.2 Creative non-fiction's chronological place in the degree

Creative non-fiction has been established as a genre of writing that aids in the development of any journalism student. Following this point is the establishment of the genre in the chronology of all journalism students' degrees. To do this it is necessary to include creative non-fiction in a core journalism subject as part of a degree.

The proposed strategy for the creation of a core class in creative non-fiction is the inclusion of the genre in a subject with another linked topic – such as Bond University's 'Magazine Features and Creative Non-fiction' subject. In this 12 week subject at Bond (to be held next in January 2007), students will be taken through the basics of feature writing for eight weeks, then introduced to the techniques of creative non-fiction and a range of the genre's publication styles for four weeks. Many other combinations would work well with creative non-fiction, such as a subject (like the one at New York University and described in Section 3) that covers a range of media and looks at new and different ways to cover the issues of the day.

The inclusion of creative non-fiction in an established subject addresses some of the issues of time and resources raised by the survey respondents. Many respondents stated it was difficult to allocate enough time for the basics of journalism, without adding another entire subject to the mix (see Chapter 6, Section 4.5). Although, it must be said that the allocation of time is really a matter of priorities. If creative non-fiction is considered to be important for students by the heads of journalism departments (as it is by the elites interviewed in this study) then they will find room for it in the curriculum.

On a budgetary level, it is worth asking why some journalism departments are happy for creative writing and/or English courses (such as the one at QUT) to teach creative non-fiction, when they could be claiming more revenue through students who desire a writing education. Five of the 22 survey respondents stated their students had the opportunity to take electives in other departments which offered creative non-fiction, and they were happy for this situation to continue. Considering the number of students enrolling in creative writing courses (many of which offer creative non-fiction) has been

increasing (Moorhouse, 2006), why wouldn't journalism departments want to cash in on the interest in this area? Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this study to predict exactly how much creative non-fiction would impact the revenue of a journalism department. However, it seems logical that more students taking electives within the department would lead to a better bottom line.

The next step in including creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education (after basic instruction in the genre), would be an elective subject that delves deeper into the techniques and publication styles of the genre. The inclusion of an elective would allow those students with an interest and aptitude for creative non-fiction to explore fully the range of opportunities the genre offers. An elective in creative non-fiction should also be created for postgraduate students, based on the undergraduate model. Changes to the quality of student work expected and the difficulty of assignments will need to be made to cater for the needs of postgraduates.

The inclusion of a creative non-fiction stand-alone subject is supported by just over half the survey respondents (55 percent) who stated that the genre needed the time and space afforded by its own subject so students could be given a proper appreciation for the genre and time to experiment with it (see Chapter 6, Section 2 - Question 14 for more details). Those department heads who reported in the survey they lacked time and resources could add the elective subject to the curriculum when resources became available.

There is no exact chronological place for the core subject which includes creative non-fiction. All that needs to be ensured is that before undertaking creative non-fiction, students should know (as the survey respondents repeatedly explained) the basics of journalism — interviewing skills, news values and how to write a hard news story. This could mean creative non-fiction instruction comes at the end of a news writing subject, or is included in another subject entirely. Ensuring the place of the genre after the basics are taught is imperative, as introducing students to an advanced non-fiction genre without this instruction would be difficult.

The elective subject should be included in the curriculum in the latter stages of the degree. As has been pointed out by the elites and the survey respondents, creative non-fiction is not a simple genre of writing, and any advanced course work should be conducted when students have had experience with less challenging tasks.

There was some suggestion in the survey that because of the challenges presented by creative non-fiction, it was beyond the reach of undergraduate students and should be restricted to postgraduate programs (see Chapter 6, Section 4.8). This argument is countered however, by the belief many academics and researchers have in journalism students' abilities, and the fact that creative non-fiction is taught to undergraduate students by a range of departments at universities such as Bond, Deakin, University of Canberra and the University of Wollongong. It is difficult to believe that these institutions, and others like them, would provide classes in creative non-fiction if students were incapable of taking them.

7.5.3 Pedagogy

This study has suggested journalism students be provided with creative non-fiction in a core subject, and then be given the option of choosing to take an elective creative non-fiction subject. The pedagogical concerns with adding a new genre of writing must also be considered to reveal its true place in a discipline's education. Pedagogy is the art or science of teaching and in this section one theory on how best to teach creative non-fiction is discussed (Lewis, 2004).

The literature has provided some suggestion of the best practice for teaching creative non-fiction and related disciplines. Mitchell Stephens' principles for practical journalism education revealed the importance of reading. In principles eight and nine Stephens explained,

Journalism courses should attempt to broaden the focus, as well as the style, of journalism... [Students] should also read examples, including book-length examples, of journalism... Journalism students, even in practical courses,

should read more. In literature courses students read the best work that has ever been written, Austen and Tolstoy, not the latest beach thriller. But our students too often are exposed only to the merely workmanlike. Journalism education should reclaim its canon: the great works of non-fiction writing... [if] students are writing about poverty, they should be reading Charles Dickens' journalism on the subject. (Dates, Glasser, Stephens, & Adam, 2006, p. 152)

In the Stage Two elite interviews, the importance of reading was also stressed. Nikki Gemmell said reading was the key to journalism students' success. Like Stephens, Gemmell believed students should be reading creative non-fiction, not just daily journalism. She said courses should provide, "Practical, inspiring stuff, great books that enthuse the students" (Gemmell, 2005, p. 4).

Like Gemmell, Helen Garner stated journalism students and professional journalists should base their writing on a wide range of reading. She credited the low quality of today's journalism with the paucity of reading among journalism students and professionals (Garner, 2005, p. 3).

As explained in Chapter 5, Garner suggested journalism students be taught creative non-fiction through examples of the best writing on offer. She suggested students be given sections of work by a writer who has a unique and talented voice and then asked to write their own story reproducing this writer's style. Students are therefore obligated to examine how the writer created the story: the sentence length, the use of dialogue, whether the writer used summaries or rich description etc.

Elite interviewee Ed Southorn was also in favour of a wide reading list, but he looked at criticism as well as practice,

Perhaps include [in the journalism curriculum] examples of some classic creative non-fiction texts over the past 100 years for analysis in the context of each's era. How they compare with each other, what they have in common,

what they can suggest for contemporary similar writing. (Southorn, 2005, p. 4)

Asking students to critique great works of creative non-fiction and then examine how and if the styles and techniques could or should be integrated into other stories is a particularly valuable suggestion. It is one also found in the literature. As explained in Section 3 above, Mitchell Stephens included the analysis and discussion of great works into a class at New York University.

The elites and the literature have made convincing arguments for how to use creative non-fiction texts in the teaching of creative non-fiction. Students need to experiment – as suggested by Stephens and Ricketson – but they also need a framework for their explorations. Reading great works and then emulating the writers' styles forces students to delve into the nuts and bolts of creative non-fiction and hopefully incorporate what they have learned into their own work. The critical analysis of works of creative non-fiction by students also aids them in understanding the techniques and applications of the genre in their own work and in the broader spectrum of journalism.

This critiquing of works of creative non-fiction (with each other and with other styles such as hard news) is not a simple task. This is acknowledged by Stephens, as his course was developed for undergraduates in an advanced stage of their degree. This theory of the pedagogy of creative non-fiction takes this into account, and as such it is suggested that this literary criticism component be a part of the elective, rather than the core, creative non-fiction subject.

Using workshops in a tutorial setting has long been a popular method of writing instruction, particularly in creative pursuits. In fact, workshoping is the most common format for university teaching. Often, in a workshop situation, students will present a piece of work to their classmates who then offer constructive criticism. The tutor then comments on the criticism (Moorhouse, 2006). The problems inherent in this style of workshop were raised by Frank Moorhouse (2006) in his series for *The Australian* on the state of writing in Australia: "I am unsure that exposing new work to inexperienced,

random, peer-group criticism is what an insecure developing writer needs.” Moorhouse makes a salient point for the teaching of creative non-fiction. Why would students, who are at best novices in creative non-fiction, be the best people to comment on the work of other students?

The workshop is a sound and important method of helping students develop their writing – but with one stipulation – the tutor (who should understand the nuances of the subject at hand) should be the only one to criticise students’ work. Students can read out their work to the class, but before and after the reading it should be the tutor who explains a piece’s problems and successes. In the researcher’s opinion, as a tutor and lecturer, the problems should be pointed out to a student before the reading and the successes should be explained to the rest of the class after it. Students should be given a chance to critique writing, but this criticism should be directed at professional work, not at their peers’ efforts.

7.5.3.1 Lessons learned from teaching creative non-fiction

The researcher trialed a two week segment in creative non-fiction in the January 2006 semester of Bond University. This segment was part of the subject ‘Magazine Features and Creative Non-Fiction’. The trial was a success – with students enjoying the genre and producing quality stories. The creative non-fiction component of the course has now been extended to four weeks (as mentioned previously, the subject will be held next in January 2007). While it was not a formal part of this study, the experience has lent itself to reflection upon many of the issues raised here, and informs the curricular and pedagogical approaches indicated above. This does not claim to be anything more than a brief anecdotal account of the experience, but nevertheless, offers a focus for discussion of some of the issues.

The initial student response to creative non-fiction was that it was challenging. There were plenty of cries of “I don’t get this” from students in the first hour of the first class. However, by the end of the first tutorial, students were remarking they enjoyed the

chance to be more creative and to use their own voices, points of view and even their own stories in a journalism subject.

Bond University uses a system of teacher/subject evaluation called TEVALS. The system involves a two sided form which asks students to fill out anonymously their opinion of the staff member and the subject using a Likert scale. On the back of the TEVALS students are asked for open ended comments on the teacher and the subject.

After their two week segment on creative non-fiction, students were asked to fill out TEVALS which spoke only to those two weeks and not the entire subject. In response to the open ended question 'What improvements would you suggest to the subject itself' there were two types of requests. The first was for more instruction in creative non-fiction. Students responded that more emphasis should be placed on the genre in the subject. The researcher also found that trying to cover the basics of creative non-fiction in two weeks was too ambitious. This, and the positive feedback the course received from students, led to the segment being extended to four weeks.

The second student request asked that the researcher teach more of the 'Magazine Features and Creative Non-Fiction' subject. This does not seem particularly relevant to the study as it may only reflect students' opinion of the researcher's teaching styles and methods, rather than their opinion of the genre.

From the TEVALS and from student responses during and outside class time, it is clear the in-class exercises where students were asked to read and emulate creative non-fiction styles were beneficial. Their success could also be measured by the development in the quality of students' work over the course and in their final creative non-fiction story submitted for assessment.

The examples of creative non-fiction, provided in class and as homework, gave students a guide as they explored the genre for the first time and attempted to write a piece of creative non-fiction. Using examples by famous and youth-oriented writers

(such as Chuck Palahniuk, author of the novel *Fight Club* and a range of creative non-fiction) in the introductory stages of the course drew in students and showed them how they could use their experiences and interests in their work. Students were also asked to comment on what they enjoyed about the readings and were asked to identify key themes and techniques at play.

Students responded well to having their exercises workshopped in the tutorial with the researcher before they read their work to the class. After this reading, the researcher made some comments to the class explaining some of the highlights of the story (techniques used etc). Students stated this also helped them improve their own work. Students were not given the opportunity to comment on their peers' stories, as this practice can be confronting and demoralising for young writers. As explained above, it is also not always beneficial to have novices in a genre of writing providing advice on that genre.

7.5.3.2 Model for creative non-fiction in journalism education

Below is a model for creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education based on the discussion above of the curricular and pedagogical issues surrounding the genre. The model includes suggestions made by the elites, the literature, and the researcher's experiences teaching of creative non-fiction. The model incorporates the findings of this study that creative non-fiction should be taught at a core and at an elective level.

Creative non-fiction classes held within a core subject

- The key techniques of creative non-fiction will be explained to students.
- Examples of short creative non-fiction will be provided to students to read and emulate (for example pieces of literary journalism and literary essays from the journal of concise creative non-fiction *Brevity* (<http://www.creativefiction.org/brevity/>)).
- Students will be given in-class exercises in which they emulate great writers' styles. They should also be asked to write at least one small piece of creative non-fiction using their own voices before they attempt their assessment piece.

- These exercises will be workshopped with the tutor and then read to the class.
- Students will be asked to write at least one piece of creative non-fiction for assessment purposes. Suggestions for assessment can be found in Appendix 3.

Creative non-fiction elective

- Build on the techniques of creative non-fiction taught in the core class.
- Students will be asked to read short and longer (including book-length) examples of a wide range of creative non-fiction (for example literary journalism, memoir, biography, literary essay).
- Students will be asked to critique examples of creative non-fiction. They should be able to identify what techniques are used and to what effect. They should also examine whether these techniques could or should be used in other stories and in other publication styles.
- In the first few classes students will be given in-class exercises in which they emulate great writers' styles. As the course progresses these exercises will be phased out, and replaced with exercises where students use the techniques learned to produce pieces of creative non-fiction using their own voices.
 - These exercises will be workshopped with the tutor and then read to the class.
- Students will be given a range creative non-fiction tasks for assessment purposes. These assessment pieces should reflect the range of creative publication styles available.

7.5.3.3 The place of creative non-fiction in journalism education

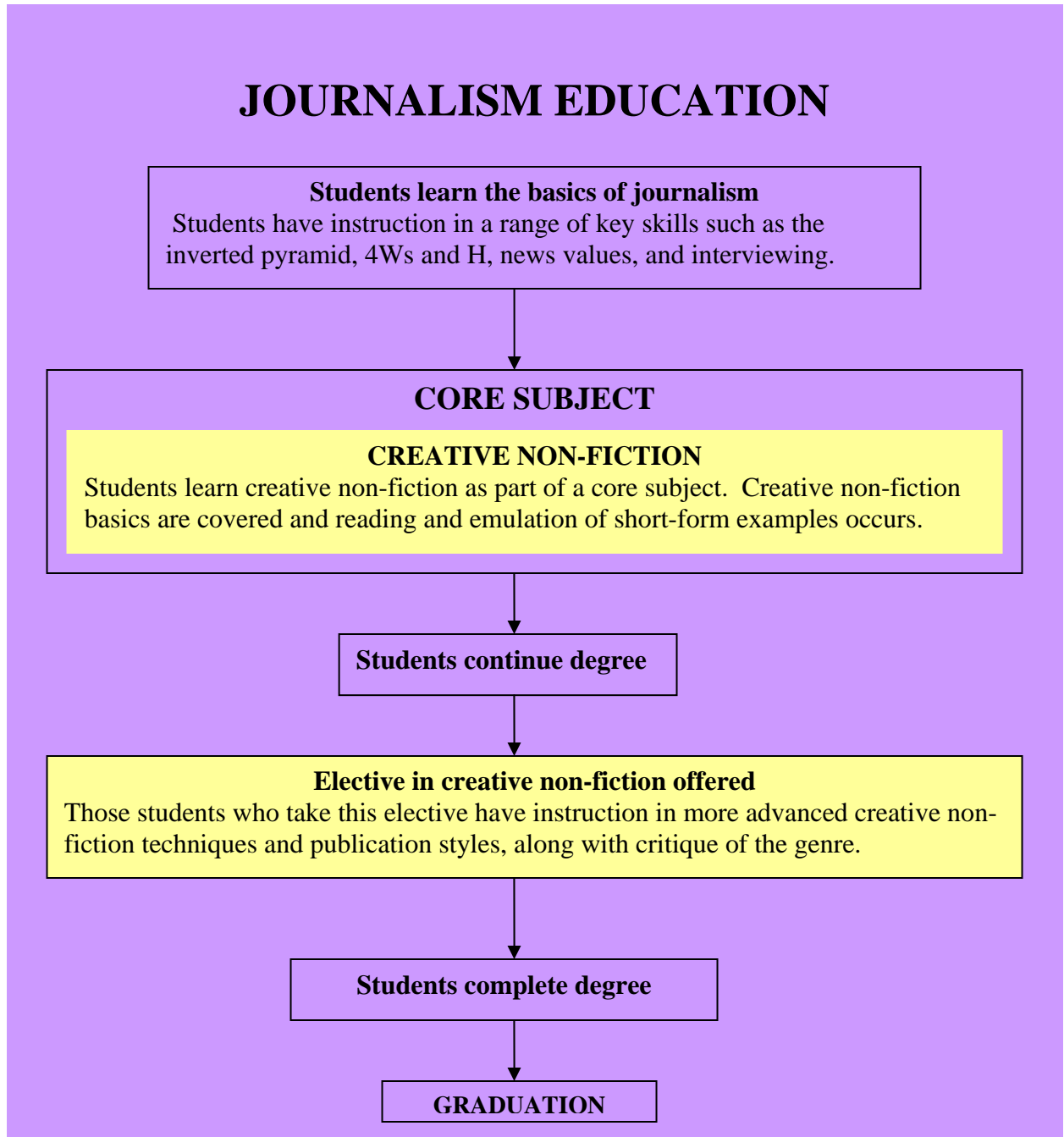
The purpose of the second stage of this study was to answer the research question 'What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?'. This question was answered through a review of the literature, elite interviews with journalism/creative non-fiction elites and a census of practical-based Australian tertiary journalism programs.

This study has found that creative non-fiction has two different places in the curriculum:

1. Creative non-fiction should be taught as a component of a core subject to allow all journalism students access to the genre. The classes in creative non-fiction should be held after students have learned the basics of journalism.
2. A comprehensive creative non-fiction elective should be included in the journalism curriculum for those students who wish to pursue an interest in the genre. This subject should be held in the latter stages of a student's degree.

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education. The diagram is a conceptual map, which provides a way to visually analyse and draw together different concepts (Marchinko, 2004, p. 6).

FIGURE 7.1 *Creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education*



The following chapter, the Conclusion, takes the concepts represented in the map above and discusses them in context with the other ideas and results raised throughout this study.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education

8.1 Introduction

This chapter assembles the key findings of this study into a final conclusive statement about the nature of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education. It also suggests some opportunities for further research.

This study sought to create a definition for creative non-fiction and then reveal where the genre may fit in Australian tertiary journalism education. To lead this exploration two research questions were formulated:

1. What is creative non-fiction?
2. What is creative non-fiction's place in Australian tertiary journalism education?

To answer these questions both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were employed. The qualitative method of elite interviewing was used in answering the first research question. To answer the second research question two methods were used. The first was elite interviewing and the second was a census, which incorporated quantitative and qualitative questions.

8.2 Review of research questions and summary of research outcomes

8.2.1 Research Question One

As explained in the Literature Review, creative non-fiction has a long history. It stretches back to the first news cried from the lips of messengers and the first tales of battles and kings scrawled on parchment. News, like fiction, began its life as a narrative. Then, in the 19th century the inverted pyramid arrived and narrative went out of fashion (Mindich, 1993, p. 1). It was at this point that creative non-fiction and journalism diverged. Creative non-fiction's path continued to be paved by non-fiction storytellers,

while journalism went forward with the four Ws and H and inverted pyramid style of hard news.

One theory on why the inverted pyramid initially flourished was the use of the telegraph. The unreliability of this new technology meant that the important information had to be sent first, in case transmission was lost before the end of the story had been sent (Mindich, 1993, p. 26).

Technology has advanced yet again. The telegraph has been superseded by the telephone, the fax, radio, television, and now, the internet. With these changes an interest in returning to narrative has grown. The inverted pyramid still dominates the newspaper front page, but there is much evidence of the rise in creative non-fiction's popularity. In the 20th century non-fiction work of writers such as George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway, Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson started trends which have enabled today's non-fiction writers to dominate many publishing markets.

Despite this popularity, no universally agreed upon term describes this genre of writing that melds hard facts with the techniques of the fiction writer. There is a range of choices available, such as 'narrative non-fiction', 'literary journalism' and 'literary non-fiction', but this study found that no term is as comprehensive as 'creative non-fiction'.

As elite interviewee and author Bill Roorbach (2001, p. 2) stated: "[No term] is any more accurate or inclusive than 'creative non-fiction,' and some are less accurate, and too exclusive." The 'creative' part of 'creative non-fiction' acknowledges the emphasis on creativity in the genre, its use of fiction writing techniques, and its links to art. The 'non-fiction' part of the term acknowledges that this is a genre of writing that is not fiction; instead it sticks to the facts in an attempt to tell the truth. Other terms, such as those which include the word 'journalism', tend to be inclusive of more journalistic publication styles – such as literary journalism and feature writing – but exclusive of other styles – such as the literary essay and memoir.

When introducing a genre of writing to the journalism community, using a term which includes the word ‘journalism’ makes the process easier. This was revealed in the literature and in the census of journalism programs. As one survey respondent (Meadows, 2005) asked, “I think it [creative non-fiction] has a place in journalism programs but the name is a little self-conscious. Why not simply teach the techniques under a journalism heading?” Easier is not always best, however, and this study concluded that no term ending in ‘journalism’ could be as all-encompassing as ‘creative non-fiction’.

While there is still some debate about the term ‘creative non-fiction’, one of this study’s key objectives was to define the term. As such, the first research question was ‘What is creative non-fiction?’. To answer this question, elite interviews with international creative non-fiction elites were conducted. In Chapter 4 these interviews were analysed and discussed, a summary of the results follow.

The elite interviews revealed the hallmarks of creative non-fiction through an examination of the genre’s approaches, techniques, the truth and what the genre excluded. The interviews recognised creative non-fiction’s links to art, its pursuit of high quality and factual and emotional truths which touch readers. Nuts and bolts characteristics were also revealed, such as its use of creative structures, character development and point of view. The interviews also identified which publishing styles fall under the banner of creative non-fiction. They included styles traditionally tied to journalism, such as literary journalism and feature writing, but also embraced less conventionally journalistic styles, such as memoir and the literary essay.

From the literature and the elite interviews, the following definition of creative non-fiction was determined:

Creative non-fiction is a genre of artistic writing which uses fiction writing techniques to tell true stories which engage readers. These techniques include the use of theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, character development, and the inclusion of the writer's point of view.

Writers of creative non-fiction strive to produce works of high quality which reach the emotional truth of the story and utilise creative structures.

Publishing styles of creative non-fiction include literary journalism, feature articles, memoir, biography, literary essay and narrative non-fiction. Famous authors of creative non-fiction include Mark Bowden, Tom Wolfe, Bill Bryson, Sarah MacDonald and Hunter S. Thompson.

8.2.2 Research question two

The next research question went to the heart of this study – determining what place the genre had in tertiary journalism education and how this place could benefit journalism students now and in the future. The question which directed this investigation was ‘What is creative non-fiction’s place in Australian tertiary journalism education?’

Two methods were used to make this determination. The first was elite interviews with Australians who practised both journalism and creative non-fiction. The discussion of the interviews is contained in Chapters 5 and 7. The second was a census of Australian university journalism departments as identified by the Journalism Education Association. The census is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. The results of these chapters and their significance are reviewed here.

The elite interviews revealed the close relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism and the benefits of creative non-fiction for journalism students. These revelations made it clear it was worthwhile including creative non-fiction in journalism education. The links between journalism and creative non-fiction were discovered across a wide range of approaches and techniques with similarities found in areas such as

structure, the truth and the influence of editors and readers. The benefits to students were revealed through the elites' own experiences with writing journalism and creative non-fiction and their support and suggestions for creative non-fiction's inclusion in journalism education.

The census of journalism departments went further in uncovering the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education through respondents' opinions and experiences of the genre. The census revealed the academy's support for creative non-fiction as a way to encourage innovations in print media, provide more jobs for graduates and improve the quality of journalism. The survey also exposed a number of concerns about creative non-fiction's inclusion in journalism education. These included creative non-fiction's use in industry, problems with students' capabilities and constraints of time and resources in journalism departments. These concerns were addressed through discussion of elite interviews, ideas of other survey respondents and evidence of creative non-fiction's place in a wide range of print media.

Through the literature, and words of the elites and survey respondents, a model for the inclusion of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education was formulated. This model was detailed in Section 5.32 of Chapter 7. It was decided a two tiered approach would both address the needs of students in accessing the genre, and the problems some departments face with access to resources and time. The creative non-fiction model includes two subjects. The first incorporates classes in creative non-fiction into an existing core subject in an undergraduate degree. The second subject is an undergraduate elective in creative non-fiction which builds on the fundamentals taught in the core subject. A postgraduate creative non-fiction offering should also be included in the curriculum, based on the undergraduate elective.

8.2.3 The nature of creative non-fiction in journalism education

This study has revealed much about creative non-fiction and tertiary journalism education. Through a review of the literature, interviews with elites in creative non-fiction and journalism, and a census of journalism departments, a definition of the genre

has been created, as has one method of including creative non-fiction in journalism education.

The number and depth of the links revealed in this study between creative non-fiction and journalism was unexpected, and survey respondents calling creative non-fiction a form or style of journalism was completely unanticipated. Nevertheless, what this study has shown is that creative non-fiction and journalism are intrinsically related. In fact, they are not unlike conjoined twins; they have their own personalities, but they share history, approaches and practices. With this in mind it has become clear that the place for creative non-fiction instruction is in a journalism department, rather than in any other university area. After all, which department is better equipped to deal with creative non-fiction? One which teaches fiction and delves into worlds based on the imagination, or one which teaches ethics, truth-seeking and the public interest?

This study has revealed creative non-fiction as an answer to the need for experimentation and challenges in tertiary journalism education. While, in this study, there has been a great deal of dialogue reported about the importance of providing students with ‘the basics’ of journalism (which is vital) the need to challenge students has also shown to be a legitimate discussion point. The basics of journalism — interview skills, understanding news values, the inverted pyramid and four Ws and H — are the vital first step for any journalism student. Any suggestion that students should not be provided with this grounding is ridiculous. Yet, it has been shown that it is equally unreasonable to suggest that education, particularly at a university level, should stop there. As university academics, how can we say we are doing our jobs if our focus is only on providing basics in a journalism course, rather than providing a place for higher learning?

The validity of creative non-fiction in journalism students’ future careers was an important discussion point in this study. Questions were raised in the survey about students’ need for instruction in creative non-fiction techniques and publication styles. The interviews with elites and a review of the literature and data on publication of

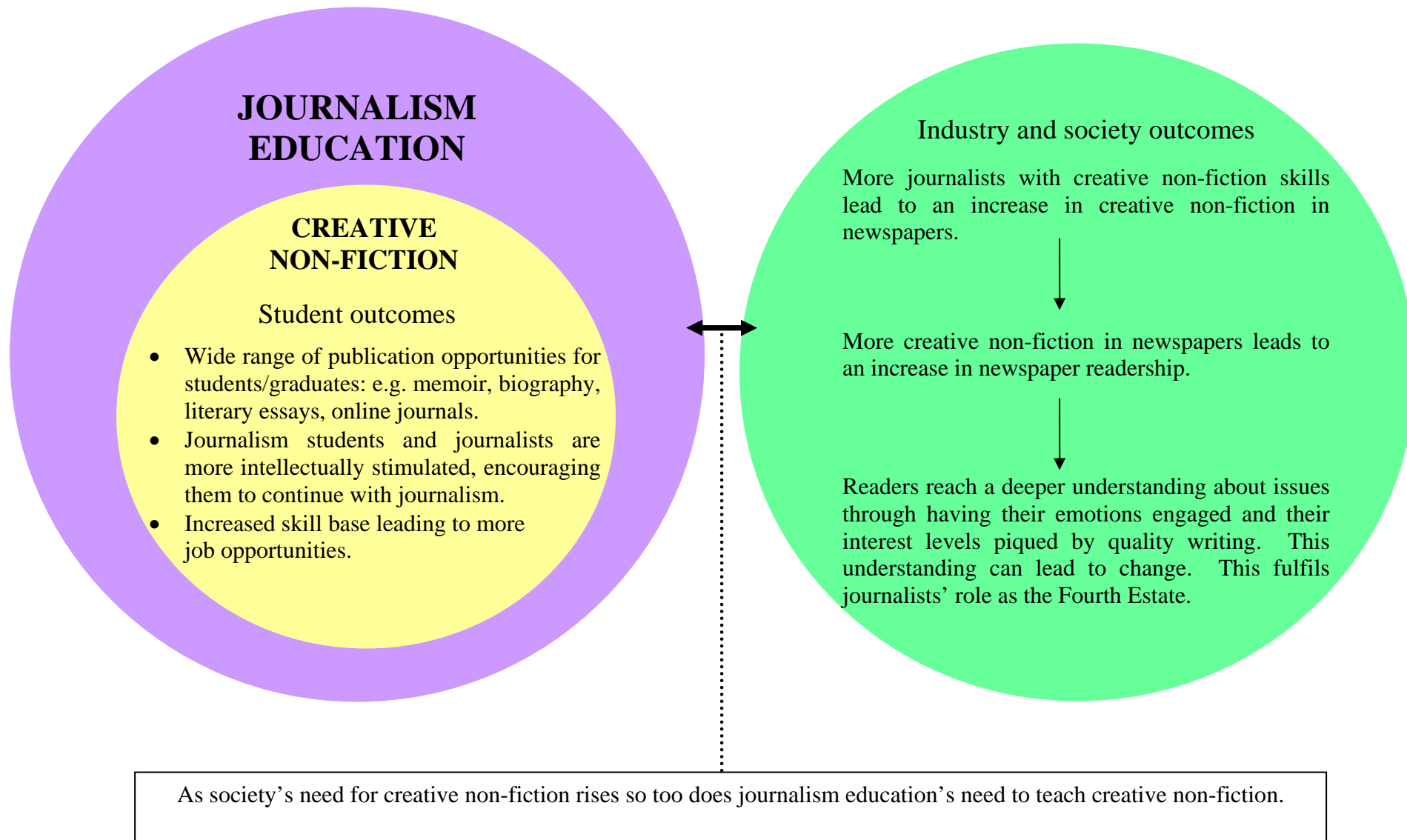
creative non-fiction provided evidence of the genre's use in the marketplace. It was revealed that creative non-fiction is widely used in magazines and in non-fiction books and that sales in both areas are increasing. It was also established that news editors and wire services are responding to the decline in newspaper readership by adding more creative non-fiction to newspapers. The web was also proven to be home to the genre through journals and news sites (though blogs were not included in the definition of creative non-fiction as explained in Chapter 4, Section 6.5). The application of creative non-fiction as a way to keep students and journalists interested in journalism was also revealed.

There would be an enormous range of ideas on how to best encourage new thinking that will improve the quality of journalism and the readership of newspapers. What this study has provided is one option. This option offers students instruction in creative non-fiction so they can be exposed to some of the best writing in journalism and in other more expansive publication fields, and have the chance to practise advanced skills they may use in their careers one day.

This study began as an exploration of a genre of writing called 'creative non-fiction'. It was proposed that this genre might provide a way to enrich the education of journalism students and offer them an outlet for their creativity during their degrees.

While the discovery of a way to increase students' appreciation of journalism and their enjoyment of their education seemed a worthy enough outcome, what has been revealed about creative non-fiction and journalism education has taken this study to a deeper level. It been revealed that creative non-fiction provides students with more job opportunities, and with a way to be a part of the future of print and perhaps even on-line journalism. The possible outcomes of including creative non-fiction in the curriculum are detailed in Figure 8.1 below.

FIGURE 8.1 *Possible outcomes of creative non-fiction's inclusion in journalism education*



As explained above, creative non-fiction has been utilised in the journalism profession as a way to encourage a return to newspapers, and by practitioners as a way to engage readers emotionally with stories. Journalism's function as the Fourth Estate is to ensure members of the public understand the issues that affect them and can therefore enact change if necessary (i.e. through voting choices in elections). What the elites in this study have proposed is that creative non-fiction can draw in readers, that it can involve them in stories so an emotional connection and an in-depth understanding of a situation can occur. To take this a step further, journalists' use of creative non-fiction can aid them in their mission as members of the Fourth Estate. How better to encourage the public to be involved in issues and governance than if they have been touched emotionally by an issue? No change can be implemented unless someone cares about what is occurring. As the literature and elite interviews revealed, at the heart of creative non-fiction is the importance of engaging the reader – at getting to the 'emotional truth' of the story.

Despite the possible wide-reaching implications of an increase in creative non-fiction in newspapers, magazines and on the bookshelves (as Figure 8.1 shows above), the focus of this study is on tertiary journalism education. Journalism students deserve the best education possible. This education should give them every chance to enjoy their work, to be part of improving the quality of journalism and fulfilling its function as the Fourth Estate. This study has shown one way of achieving this is by, as the title of this study suggests, 'Putting the storytelling back into stories' — including creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education.

Directions for further research

Throughout the discussion in Chapters 4 – 7 there have been a number of suggestions for further research. This study has focused on creative non-fiction, print journalism and education, but it has raised a number of issues in related areas worthy of investigation by future researchers. In this section these issues are reviewed.

- As this research has looked into the inclusion of creative non-fiction in journalism education, journalism and creative non-fiction educators and professionals were selected for study. However, as creative writing departments are where the majority of creative non-fiction subjects are housed, it would be worthwhile conducting elite interviews or a survey of creative writing professionals and/or creative writing educators for their views on the place of the genre in universities.
- Throughout the different studies term ‘creative non-fiction’ proved to be the subject of debate. It would be worth investigating the way Australian newsrooms would respond to the term and if this response would impact the growth of the genre in newsrooms and the ability of new journalists educated in creative non-fiction to encourage its use.
- As the interest in creative non-fiction is increasing, it would be worth conducting a study into the financial impact of adding the genre to journalism curricula. The results of a study assessing the impact of creative non-fiction on a journalism department’s budget could lead to a change in the number of universities which teach the genre.
- In Chapter 7 the idea was raised that as the internet grows, so should the number of prospects for publishing creative non-fiction on the World Wide Web. It would be worth noting how many websites feature creative non-fiction today and if that number increases with time.

- This research has suggested that if students are taught creative non-fiction methods then this may lead to more creative non-fiction in newspapers. If creative non-fiction is included in journalism curricula it would be worthwhile conducting a longitudinal content analysis of the number of newspaper articles containing creative non-fiction techniques now and in, say, 20 years time, when today's graduates are in a position to control newspaper content.
- Following the suggestion above, it would also be worthwhile to survey newspaper editors today on their opinion of creative non-fiction and, if the genre is added to journalism curricula, in 20 years.
- The researcher taught a number of classes in creative non-fiction and received responses from students on their opinions of the genre. It would be worthwhile expanding this into an organised study which measures students' ability to produce creative non-fiction and their assessment of the genre.
- To investigate further the validity of creative non-fiction in the workplace, the careers of journalism students who study creative non-fiction could be tracked. The volume of their use of the genre and how, or if, this changes with time would reveal a great deal about creative non-fiction's use in industry. This study could be included as part of the student-based study suggested immediately above.
- There was some suggestion in the literature, and from survey respondents, that a culture of experimentation at university leads to positive changes in industry. If students are given this opportunity through creative non-fiction it would be interesting to conduct research on the state of journalism today and in 10 and 20 years' time.
- It was stated that blogs were not literature or creative non-fiction. It would be worth studying the state of blogs today and again in the future to discover if their quality and/or status improves with time.

As can be seen, there are a number of opportunities for further research. If trends continue, creative non-fiction will become a more commonly published and discussed genre of writing and this study will become one of many investigations into its uses and implications.